2013

A Historical Analysis of South Holland School District 151 Desegregation Order: An Examination of Superintendent Decisions Based on Board Actions Grounded in the Context of Prevailing Social, Political, Legal and Educational Conditions for the Period 1967-2010

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF SOUTH HOLLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT 151 DESEGREGATION ORDER: AN EXAMINATION OF SUPERINTENDENT DECISIONS BASED ON BOARD ACTIONS GROUNDED IN THE CONTEXT OF PREVAILING SOCIAL, POLITICAL, LEGAL AND EDUCATIONAL CONDITIONS FOR THE PERIOD 1967-2010

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

PROGRAM IN ADMINISTRATION AND SUPERVISION

BY

CECILIA VILLANUEVA HEIBERGER

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

MAY 2013
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for the guidance and support I received from my dear friend the late Dr. Melba Hanssen whose spirit kept me focused on what is truly important when it comes to educating all children.

I also wish to express my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Janis Fine for her guidance in helping me find my voice grounded in social justice as I completed this dissertation. Her insightful comments and challenging questions contributed to my growth as an educational leader. My deepest thanks are extended to Dr. Marla Israel and Dr. LeViis Haney for serving on my committee and providing guidance.

I wish to thank my friend and mentor Dr. Douglas Hamilton for bringing to my attention the story of South Holland School District 151’s struggle for educational equity. I am also deeply indebted to Mrs. Jessica Buckner for trusting me to share her personal experiences of pain and triumph related to the desegregation of her school district. A special thank you is extended to Mrs. Judy Hamilton for her help in reviewing my work. I am also thankful to the staff at Lansing School District 158 for supporting my efforts to achieve this personal goal of attaining a doctorate in Educational Leadership.

This dissertation is por mi familia. I often think of my late parents Adelina and Santiago who did not have the opportunity to experience an education past the fourth grade. I feel certain that they are proud of all their children. I would like to thank my
brothers and sisters; David, Sylvia, Jose and Alicia for their love, support and encouragement.

I wish to acknowledge my sons Brian and Brenden and dear friend Sara for their belief in me. I appreciated our late night family dinners, engaging conversations and moments of immense laughter. You truly helped me balance my life with work, school and family during this time period.

Finally, to my husband Bob, my best friend and greatest supporter who pushed me every step of the way. You have always put me first and I am forever thankful for your love. I would not be where I am today were it not for you.
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ABSTRACT

This study provided a historical analysis of the 1968 court ordered desegregation of South Holland School District 151. The purpose of this case study was to examine, according to primary source evidence, how the superintendents grounded their decisions within the prevailing social, political, legal and educational conditions of the time. The researcher applied the leadership framework of Sergiovanni’s Five Sources of Authority by identifying words and actions of superintendents that support a source of authority. This case study sought to identify how the decisions made, actions taken, and resulting changes created a new context for each succeeding superintendent to operate within. This case study also examined how each superintendent brought awareness to the board of the prevailing social, political, legal, and educational conditions of the time as the rationale for the need to develop policy and/or make decisions. An examination of the board’s policies and/or decisions was made to identify what values were represented based on a superintendent’s contextual descriptions of the district’s needs.

This study began with the early history of the Village of South Holland and examined the religious and political influences that guided the transformation to a suburban setting from a rural community. The study followed the development of South Holland School District 151; examined the factors that contributed to the charges of unequal treatment by the African American Phoenix community; and concluded with the process of desegregation and the impact upon the school community.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purchase of 300 acres of land in Thornton Township located approximately twenty miles south of Chicago in 1847 by Hendrik de Jong represented the beginning of the community known as South Holland.1 Dutch and German farmers came together in 1892 to raise onion sets and eventually dominated the market earning the title of Onion Set Capital of the World.2 Onion set and truck farming provided the economic base for South Holland as agriculture continued to provide income for Dutch farmers and Mexican migrant workers through the 1960s. Farming eventually gave way to the development of subdivisions as Interstate 57 and 94 made the Village of South Holland more easily accessible to downtown Chicago.3 Dutch families from the south section of Englewood, Riverdale, and Roseland began to move into South Holland during the early 1950s and 1960s. More than 3,000 Dutch Reformed lived in Englewood during the 1920s as the community prospered with the second busiest shopping district located at Halsted and 63rd Street which was anchored by Sears Roebuck and Company and

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2Ibid.

Wieboldt's department stores. By the 1950s the close knit Dutch community began their exodus from Englewood as African Americans moved into the area in search of employment and housing. The Englewood business district fell into decline by the 1970s with the closing of Sears and the relocation of Chicago State University to Roseland. Riverdale was home to the Pullman Farm, Pullman Brickyard, and Sherwin Williams, one of America’s largest paint manufacturers. Government land was developed in Riverdale to include the construction of the Cal-Sag Channel which contributed to industrial development that provided jobs and attracted all races of people. The Chicago Housing Authority built the Altgeld Gardens Public Housing Project in 1945 with the hopes of developing an integrated community only to experience racial strife between Whites and African Americans. Changing industrial patterns led to a decline in Riverdale’s economic base leaving behind polluted tracts of land, high unemployment, and public housing developments which led Whites to move to South Holland. The Roseland community was settled by Dutch families in an area known as High Prairie and was home to many diverse neighborhoods. Between 1860 and 1960 Roseland attracted shoppers from Chicago’s far South Side and southern suburbs to South Michigan Avenue between 111th Street and 115th Street. Roseland experienced racial strife as early as the 1920s and 1930s as local real estate agents urged racially restrictive covenants on new

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5 Ibid., p. 147.

developers and homeowners. Local businessman Donald O’Toole constructed housing for African Americans in the Princeton Park neighborhood of Roseland which created animosity between the races. During the 1940s local leaders in Roseland joined the violence aimed at African American residents living in veterans’ housing in Fernwood, one of Roseland’s oldest residential neighborhoods. Production at Pullman and other local industries slowed and workers followed their jobs to the suburbs. The racial composition of the community changed significantly between 1965 and 1975 which led to many of the Dutch families leaving Roseland for South Holland.\textsuperscript{7} The conservative nature of South Holland characterized by the Praying Hands on the town’s water tank (see Figure 1) illustrates its early Dutch founders influence on the religious family oriented lifestyle many Dutch community members came to expect.\textsuperscript{8} The Village of South Holland passed blue laws in 1959 banning liquor sales, prohibiting certain businesses from operating on Sundays and passed zoning restrictions that did not allow for apartment buildings and condominiums. This conservatism helped to shape and maintains a religious family oriented lifestyle that proved attractive to people from Riverdale and Roseland looking to escape the troubles of urban living.\textsuperscript{9}

\textsuperscript{7}Ibid., pp. 264-266.


\textsuperscript{9}Ibid.
The Village of Phoenix was incorporated in 1900 by Polish settlers and was undergoing change as African Americans moved into the area from the south during the 1940s to work in nearby factories and railroads.\textsuperscript{10} By 1960 the village of Phoenix was segregated racially with Whites living in the south section of the village and African Americans living in the north section. The City of Harvey, with the help of the White majority administration of Phoenix, annexed the southern portion of the village resulting in Phoenix losing 35\% of its general revenue in taxes and commercial business.\textsuperscript{11}

Former Superintendent of School District 151, Mrs. Jessica Buckner recalled her first


impression as a Phoenix resident was one of numerous taverns lining the streets while across the street in the city of Harvey or across town in South Holland there were none (Buckner Interview, p. 57).

South Holland School District 151 maintained six neighborhood schools that served students from the Villages of South Holland, Thornton, Dolton, Phoenix and the City of Harvey. Roosevelt, Madison, and Eisenhower Schools were located in South Holland and served students in grades kindergarten through eight. Taft School was located in Harvey and served students in grades kindergarten through eight. Kennedy and Coolidge Schools were located adjacent to one another in the Village of Phoenix and served students in grades kindergarten through three and four through eight, respectively. The Kennedy School was later enmeshed in a controversy over which community the school was located within. In 1965 a petition was made to South Holland to de-annex the land adjacent to Coolidge School and annex it to Phoenix. It was not until 1969 that Phoenix annexed the property. Prior to the 1969 annexation, School District 151 board members sent a letter to the Village of South Holland as well as the School Township Treasurer urging them to vacate the 1965 resolution. Even though the Village of Phoenix annexed the property the School Township Treasurer never sent the paperwork to the County. Therefore the property was never officially de-annexed by South Holland and annexed by Phoenix. The controversy reappeared again when Phoenix initiated the building of a public library on the property of the Kennedy School

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in the Fall of 2010. The issue of ownership of the land was resolved in the Spring of 2011 with both parties cooperating with each village passing resolutions that allowed the property to reside within the Village of Phoenix.\textsuperscript{13}

School District 151 built Roosevelt School in South Holland in 1931 and Coolidge School in Phoenix in 1933 during the Depression.\textsuperscript{14} By 1948 Roosevelt’s student body was all White, while Coolidge’s student body became increasingly African American. In 1948 enrollment at Coolidge School was approximately 70\% White however; by 1956, the enrollment changed to approximately 99\% African American. During this time no African Americans resided in any area of School District 151 other than in the community of Phoenix.\textsuperscript{15}

The schools in South Holland School District 151 were managed conservatively as the board being predominantly Dutch was frugal in their saving of funds. In 1958, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) inspected the school district warning the school board and the superintendent that the low tax rate and minimum expenditure spent educating each student could lead to the district losing state aid. The board of education had maintained and operated on a low educational tax rate of $0.75 since 1948 despite an increase in enrollment of 300\%.

\textsuperscript{13} South Holland Board Meeting Minutes, August 18, 1969 and October 20, 1969 detail legal concerns regarding the disannexation of the Kennedy School property. Dr. Hamilton confirmed in January, 2012 the resolution of the legal matter stating the Kennedy property is located in Phoenix.


district again in February 1962 observing that the normal increases in assessed valuation and the increases in state aid had filled the gap over the years; however it had not made it possible to provide substantial improvements to the educational programs offered to the children. The OSPI indicated that additional revenue would be needed in order for the district to maintain a quality program and keep up with the increasing enrollment. The conservative handling of district funds by failing to raise the educational fund tax rate and spend the minimum amount of money to educate a child placed the school district in a precarious financial position.  

The 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka* Supreme Court decision served as the initial impetus for African American parents from Coolidge School to address the school board in 1956. Coolidge parents perceived unfair and unequal treatment towards their children when compared to the other schools in the district, resulting in a boycott of the district’s Phoenix schools. The Coolidge parents charged that their children were being abused by the teachers, the educational programs were inadequate, and the staff was incompetent. Mrs. Buckner recalled as a parent during the late 1950s the confrontations she and other Phoenix parents had with the board of education when trying to bring attention to the overcrowded conditions at Coolidge School and the need for new books and materials; not the used books they were given.
with the Roosevelt School stamp (Buckner interview, p. 3). The board responded to the Coolidge committee stating:

The Board of Education of District 151 pledges its continued and unceasing efforts to provide the very best it can in educational plans, teachers and programs, consistent of course, with the need to constantly exercise careful judgment in the expenditure of the funds entrusted to its care. The teachers of District 151 have pledged to the board and the community their continued efforts toward doing the best possible job in promoting the education and training of the children in the District.\textsuperscript{19}

The movement towards educational equality continued in September 1956 with a group of Phoenix parents: Mrs. Toler, Mrs. Ellinson, Mrs. Steele, and Mr. Bevins who took their children to the all-White Roosevelt School located in South Holland and tried to enroll them due to the overcrowded conditions at Coolidge. They were informed of district boundary lines that they previously were unaware existed on paper and were denied enrollment.\textsuperscript{20} The parents left the school feeling intimidated and most of their frustration was based on the idea that as much as they tried to prepare for a discussion with the board; the board was not receptive to understanding their plight. According to Mrs. Buckner, the Phoenix parents did not realize the avenues they had available to them and that they too had a say in their school. Mrs. Toler, Mrs. Barr, Mrs. Perkins, Mrs. Suggs and Mrs. Buckner (see Figure 2) working behind the scenes during the late 1950s and early 1960s, began attending board meetings and met with legislators in Springfield.

\textsuperscript{19} South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, February 4, 1957. School District 151 Board of Education Statement and Decision in Regard to Charges and Demands Made by the Citizens School Committee of Phoenix, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{20} United States of America vs. School District 151 of Cook County, Illinois, No. 17754 Civil Action No. 68C755, Appendix Volume I, Excerpts from Testimony of Iola Toler, Transcript, p. 701, Appendix, p. 453.
who were members of the Education Committee to get someone to listen. Mrs. Buckner, employed as a teacher in the district, would collect information related to student attendance, curriculum materials and administrative memos to staff and would crumble up the gathered information and toss it out the window to a person waiting below. She did this because the board was very secretive in their discussions with the public and especially Phoenix residents. The women organized themselves using Mrs. Toler’s church contacts and scheduled meetings in church basements to find more ways to overcome the barriers (Buckner interview, pp. 1-5).

![Figure 2. Honor Ceremony for Herbert, Toler, Buckner, and Barr](image)

The board continued to follow their neighborhood schools policy when addressing the overcrowding at Coolidge School. The residents of Harvey did not want to have to take the overflow of Phoenix students attending Coolidge School so the board approved the building of the Kennedy School adjacent to the original Coolidge School in
This resulted in the continued containment of African American students within the Phoenix community, while also building the Taft School in Harvey to take the overflow of White students from South Holland.

During the 1965-1966 school year, Reverend Hester of the Phoenix Schools Citizens Committee presented a list of 11 grievances related to the continued need to address the quality and equality of educational opportunities available for the students of the Coolidge-Kennedy Schools to the board of education. The Phoenix Schools Citizens Committee demanded that the board of education integrate faculty and students as well as address curriculum, attendance areas, and improve facilities and services to all students throughout the district. The Phoenix Schools Citizens Committee stated:

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Dispite (sic) all past events and in the interest of establishing and maintaining a harmonious relationship, we make this one last official appeal to the Board of Education of School District 151. We desire that they have this final opportunity to act in this matter for the welfare of all of our children regardless of Race, Color, or Creed.
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The board responded to the claims presented by the Phoenix citizens of unfair and unequal treatment, integration, curriculum, and attendance areas stating:

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The principle of neighborhood schools is well established in the field of education. It has many cultural and administrative advantages. This school district has not segregated students in any school on account of his color, race or nationality. In any area with expanding percentage of
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Negro population it is inevitable that a racial imbalance will result in certain schools….It must be kept in mind at all times that it is the duty of the board of education to provide the best education for all children of the district. It has not been indicated by the demands submitted that the children of School District 151 are not receiving the best education this board can provide operating with a limited educational tax rate of $0.86. Nor has it been indicated that the children would receive a better education if these demands were met.\(^\text{25}\)

The 1960s represented an era of change for African Americans. The world watched as thousands of people, both African American and White, came together in 1963 for the March on Washington to call on President Kennedy and members of congress to provide equal access to public facilities, quality education, adequate employment, and decent housing for African Americans. The passage of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*, the *Voting Rights Act of 1965*, and the *Civil Rights Act of 1968* together reinvigorated the rights of African Americans and the expectation of equal protection under the United States Constitution.\(^\text{26}\) While the rural landscape of South Holland may have changed, the Dutch conservative values did not. Plato’s Allegory of the Cave is demonstrated by what may be considered South Holland’s myopic vision in its quest to maintain the status quo contributing to a resistance to change.\(^\text{27}\) Just as in the Allegory of the Cave, the cave dwellers were trapped by the construction of their own reality, so too were the founding members of South Holland who worked to preserve the conservative character of their community.

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Despite the life altering social changes taking place throughout the country during the 1950s and 1960s, the Village of South Holland did not perceive itself to be directly affected and saw no need to change. The South Holland School District 151 Board of Education continued their practice of segregating the African American school children within the community of Phoenix. The Phoenix parents were unable to convince the board of education that the changes they had requested would in fact result in a better education for their children.28

The board of education’s conservative approach to dealing with the concerns raised by the citizens of Phoenix was challenged in 1968 when U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark filed Civil Action Complaint 68C755 citing the district’s violation of Title IV of the Civil Rights Act and the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The Phoenix parents attributed their success in bringing the lawsuit forward to Mrs. Toler’s leadership and the support of numerous “silent partners”. The federal attorneys met with the women in one of their homes and they could not discuss publicly who filed the suit (Buckner Interview, pp. 2-8). Mrs. Iola Toler was eventually subpoenaed to testify for the United States government against South Holland School District 151.29

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Holland School District 151 was identified as the first school district north of the Mason-Dixon Line to undergo court order desegregation by Judge Julius Hoffman.\textsuperscript{30}

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this case study is to examine, according to primary source evidence, how the superintendents grounded their decisions within the prevailing social, political, legal, and educational conditions of the time. The researcher applied the leadership framework of Sergiovanni’s Five Sources of Authority by identifying words and actions of superintendents that supported a source of authority. This case study will seek to identify how the decisions made, actions taken, and resulting changes contributed to a new environment for each succeeding superintendent to operate within. This case study examined how each superintendent brought awareness to the board of the prevailing social, political, legal, and educational conditions of the time as the rationale for the need to develop policy and/or make decisions. An examination of the board’s policies and/or decisions was made to identify the values represented based on a superintendent’s contextual descriptions of the district’s needs. South Holland superintendents included in this historical analysis for the time period 1966 through 2010 are: Dr. Charles B. Watts, Dr. Thomas E. Van Dam, Dr. Janice Potter, Mrs. Jessica Buckner, Mr. Berthard Mitchell, Jr. and Dr. Douglas Hamilton.

**Significance of the Study**

The study of the desegregation of South Holland School District 151 is significant because it provides insight into the decision making process embraced by the district’s

\textsuperscript{30}Van Dam, *Who’s First on the Bus*, pp. 70-72.
superintendents grounded in the context of the prevailing social, political, legal, and educational conditions of the time using primary source documents. This historical case study may provide school leaders with a basis for discussion and/or direction as they face changing demographics within their own school communities that struggle with the decision to maintain neighborhood schools versus grade centers. The study of the court ordered desegregation of South Holland School District 151 identified the impact of the board’s actions and superintendent’s decisions upon all the stakeholders of the community and explored whether the best interests of the students were the priority. An analysis of each superintendent’s leadership capacity viewed through the lens of Sergiovanni’s Five Sources of Authority is significant because it provided insight into the development of specific conditions that may have contributed to inequitable educational settings and how those inequities were addressed. This historical case study also provided superintendents with an awareness of the full desegregation process of a school community including the reasons detailed by the court supporting the government’s contention of consciously implemented de jure segregated practices by the South Holland School District 151 School Board. This historical case study may also provide a basis for discussion when compared to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS), located in North Carolina, who operated an integrated school system until 2002 when the U.S. Supreme Court denied certiorari review to the Fourth Circuit’s decision affirming the lower court’s judgment that CMS was a unitary district. This decision resulted in the re-segregation of its schools based on residential patterns.31 The CMS case is significant

31R.A. Mickelson, “The Academic Consequences of Desegregation and Segregation: Evidence
because it validates the use of race in student assignments when the goal is integration rather than segregation.

**Research Questions**

The following questions were answered through this historical documentary review:

1. According to primary sources, how did the superintendents ground their decisions in the prevailing social, political, legal, and/or educational conditions of the time?

2. According to primary sources, how did each superintendent bring to the board an awareness of the prevailing social, political, legal, and/or educational conditions of the time as the rationale for the need to develop policy and/or make decisions?

3. According to primary sources, in what ways did the board’s decisions, actions taken, and resulting changes contribute to a new context for each succeeding superintendent to operate within?

4. According to the primary sources examined, what sources of authority, based on Sergiovanni’s leadership framework, were represented by the superintendents in their arguments?

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5. In response to the superintendent’s contextual description of the district’s needs, what values were represented in the board’s enacted policies and/or decisions?

Methodology

The research methodology used for this study was a mixed methodology consisting of historical documentary research, an oral history, and interview conducted with retired Superintendent Mrs. Jessica Buckner and the current superintendent of South Holland School District 151, Dr. Douglas Hamilton, respectively.

Historical Documentary

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison defined historical research as “…the systemic and objective location, evaluation, and synthesis of evidence in order to establish facts and draw conclusions about past events.”\(^{32}\) This modernist approach to historical study maintains “…that history is still about objective and forensic research into the sources, the reconstructing of the past as it actually happened, and the freedom of the whole process from ideological contamination…”\(^{33}\) The researcher followed a reconstructionist perspective ensuring that the historical narrative developed was based on empirical evidence collected through the analysis of documents with no underlying ideological point of view (e.g., critical theory ideology).\(^{34}\) The study of documents, according to Annelise Riles, is important because they represent artifacts of modern

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\(^{34}\) Ibid.
knowledge practices that define ethnography itself. “To study documents, then, is by definition also to study how ethnographers themselves know. The document becomes at once an ethnographic object, an analytical category, and a methodological orientation.”

The researcher examined the documents through the lens of Sergiovanni’s *Five Sources of Authority* and identified the words and actions of the superintendents as they enacted policies and/or decisions within the prevailing social, political, legal and educational conditions of the time.

The researcher examined primary source evidence beginning with a memoir written by Dr. Thomas E. Van Dam called "Who’s First on the Bus?" relating his detailed experiences with the events surrounding the desegregation order. The memoir, first published in 2006, helped triangulate the events and dates discussed with the public records from South Holland School District 151 Board of Education minutes, letters to the board, superintendent notes, official government memorandums from the Equal Educational Opportunities Program (EEOP), Office of Civil Rights status reports and board resolutions covering the period 1956 to 2010. Original court documents including board depositions containing executive session discussions related to the events that led to the desegregation order were also examined. The researcher viewed a 1968 documentary, *Hear Us O Lord*, located at Westchester University’s film archives collection, which depicted the feelings of the people of South Holland as they faced forced desegregation. The researcher examined both local and national newspaper

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accounts covering the desegregation of the schools in South Holland School District 151 for the period 1967 to 2010. The researcher also reviewed the South Holland Historical Society archives to gather information on the early history and settlement of the Village of South Holland. Documents uncovered include a 1939 sociological study of South Holland, Illinois; local author, Richard Cook’s 1968 book on South Holland’s history; historical photographs of the village and school; and centennial celebration records.

**Oral History**

The Oral History Association promotes oral history as a method of gathering and preserving historical information through recorded interviews with participants in past events and ways of life.36 Ritchie writes “Memory is the core of oral history, from which meaning can be extracted and preserved.”37 The Smithsonian Folklife and Oral History Interviewing Guide states “Stories are important sources of information for the community researcher – they encapsulate attitudes and beliefs, wisdom and knowledge that lie at the heart of a person’s identity and experience…they embody human truths – a particular way of looking at the world.”38 According to deMarrais, a phenomenological inquiry is one where “researchers create contexts in which participants are encouraged to reflect retrospectively on an experience they have already lived through and describe this


37Ibid., p. 19.

experience in as much detail as possible to the interviewer.”

Larson discusses grounded theory as a theoretical base to inform the interview process stating “…the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data” further stating that “the emphasis on a lack of preconceived notions requires that the researcher have no prepared questions or defined problem…the main purpose is less to seek information than to record …how one man or woman looks back on their life as a whole, or part of it.” However, other oral history researchers such as Portelli, sees “thick dialogue” as requiring a flexible interview approach, but not to the point of noninterference. “In thick dialogue, questions arise dialectically from the answers.”

The researcher conducted an open-ended phenomenological interview with retired superintendent, Mrs. Jessica Buckner, focusing on her lived experiences as an African American parent and classroom teacher during the forced desegregation of South Holland School District 151 and as the first African American superintendent of the district. The Oral History Protocol (see Appendix B) was used to guide the oral history interview of Mrs. Buckner which took approximately 60-90 minutes. The protocol consisted of an open-ended request to discuss the interviewee’s experiences with related probes designed to reflect upon Mrs. Buckner’s first-hand knowledge as she served the district as a classroom teacher during the tumultuous time period of the initial desegregation court


41 Ibid.
order as well as reflect on her decision making in her role as superintendent of School District 151 grounded in the prevailing social, political, legal, and educational conditions of the time. The researcher reviewed with the interviewee the informed consent form (see Appendix A) detailing the purpose of the research, the scope of the interviewee’s participation including the recording, transcription, and right to terminate participation in the interview at any time.

Interview

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison describe interviews as enabling participants “… to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view. In these senses the interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life: it is part of life itself, its human embeddedness is inescapable.”42 Kvale and Brinkman describe a semi-structured interview as “neither an open every day conversation nor a closed questionnaire…focus is on certain themes and may include suggested questions…The written text and sound recording together constitute the materials for the subsequent analysis of meaning.”43 The researcher reviewed the informed consent form (see Appendix C) detailing the purpose of the research, the scope of the interviewee’s participation including the recording, transcription, and right to terminate participation in the interview at any time with current Superintendent, Dr. Douglas Hamilton. The researcher conducted a semi-structured, open-ended interview with Dr. Hamilton using the Interview Protocol.


Questions (see Appendix D) as a guide to provide for structuring as well as allow the researcher to engage the participant. The questions were designed to reflect upon the actions or changes implemented within the district to ensure continued compliance with the desegregation court order and the transition process to a unitary status district as well as reflected on his decision making as the current superintendent of School District 151 grounded in the prevailing social, political, legal, and educational conditions of the time. The interview was digitally recorded and a verbatim written transcript of the interview was provided. A person qualified to transcribe the interviews was hired. The qualified transcriber signed a confidentiality agreement to protect the confidentiality of the respondents, the data files, and the transcripts (see Appendix E). The research conducted included the analysis of the interview, oral history, and relevant primary and secondary sources according to Sergiovanni’s Five Sources of Authority for Leadership for each superintendent.

Reflexive Journal

The researcher, a Hispanic female, recognized the need to control for ideological contamination and possible bias as primary source documents were analyzed. In order to acknowledge the researcher’s possible bias and provide control during the research, the researcher kept a reflexive journal that documented reaction to the primary source materials, questions, assumptions, contradictions, and personal reflections.

Sergiovanni’s Five Sources of Authority

According to primary source evidence, the researcher identified how the superintendents grounded their decisions within the prevailing social, political, legal, and
educational conditions of the time applying the leadership framework of Sergiovanni’s Five Sources of Authority. The researcher examined the words and actions of the six superintendents to identify the source of authority used in their leadership capacity. The five sources of authority within this framework are defined as follows:

**Bureaucratic Authority** is based on the use of rules, regulations, mandates, job descriptions, and expectations. This form of authority relies upon a hierarchal management style that is punitive in nature if directives are not adhered to. Bureaucratic authority requires consistent monitoring and tends to induce a state of subordination.  

**Psychological Authority** relies upon a leader’s motivational and human relations skills. The use of this authority promotes a congenial and cooperative work environment that leads to rewards for those who follow. Psychological authority requires consistent monitoring and leads to performances based on “what gets rewarded, gets done.”

**Technical-rational Authority** relies upon forms of evidence presumed to be the truth derived from logic and scientific research including best practices, data driven decision making, and prescribed approaches. Monitoring of the process is required in order to ensure compliance.

**Professional Authority** relies on informed craft knowledge and personal expertise within a collaborative and collegial environment. Scientific research is used to

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45 Ibid., pp.36-37.

46 Ibid., p. 37.
inform and not prescribe. Professional authority creates a sense of flow as responses come from within and are not imposed and leads to performances based on “what is rewarding gets done.”

**Moral Authority** relies on obligations and duties derived from shared community values, ideas, and ideals. Informal norms govern behavior and community members respond to duties and obligations.

**Limitations**

The researcher acknowledges that this study is subject to the following limitations:

1. Four of the six superintendents are deceased.
2. This study does not examine student data to determine the impact of the desegregation order upon student achievement.
3. The researcher acknowledges that one of the oral history interviews will be based on experiences that took place over forty-five years ago and recognizes there may be some loss of specific details.
4. The school district provided original board depositions which the researcher has noted specific pages leading to potential controversial remarks and/or clarifying details have been removed. This also included testimony provided by specific board members.

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47Ibid., p. 38.

48Ibid., p. 39.
5. The researcher, a Hispanic female, currently serves as a superintendent in a K-8 elementary district with similar demographics and neighborhood schools. The researcher maintained a reflexive journal to control for possible biases.

**Key Terms**

**Amicus Curiae** brief or *Friend of the Court* brief is a statement made on behalf or in support of a party to a lawsuit.⁴⁹

**Civil Action** pertains to any lawsuit relating to civil matters and not criminal prosecution.⁵⁰

**Civil Rights Act of 1964** was established under the Johnson administration to enforce the constitutional right to vote, to confer jurisdiction upon the district courts of the United States to provide injunctive relief against discrimination in public accommodations, to authorize the Attorney General to institute suits to protect constitutional rights in public facilities and public education, to extend the Commission on Civil Rights, to prevent discrimination in federally assisted programs, and to establish a Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity.⁵¹

**Certiorari** is a writ issued by a higher court to obtain records on a case from a lower court so that the case can be reviewed.⁵²

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⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.
Desegregation as it pertains to Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is the assignment of students to public schools and within such schools without regard to their race, color, religion, or national origin, but it shall not mean the assignment of students to public schools in order to overcome racial imbalance.\textsuperscript{53}

De facto Segregation is the separation of members of different races by various social and economic factors, not by virtue of any government action or statute.\textsuperscript{54}

De jure Segregation is the separation of members that is imposed by law. De jure segregation is a social system that provides separate facilities for minority groups.\textsuperscript{55}

Historical documentary research is the systematic and objective location, evaluation and synthesis of evidence in order to establish facts and draw conclusions about past events.\textsuperscript{56}

Injunction is an order issued by a court ordering someone to do something or prohibit some act after a court hearing.\textsuperscript{57}

Primary Sources are those closest to the topic either generated at the time of the event or by the subject in question. Primary sources can include letters, diaries, speeches, contemporary newspaper articles, photographs, or other contemporary material.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{53}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{54}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{55}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{56}Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, Research Methods in Education.

Phenomenology is a philosophical perspective based upon careful descriptions and analyses of consciousness, with a focus on the subjects’ life world and involves a search for essential meanings of the described phenomena.  

Segregation is the act or process of separating a race, class, or ethnic group from a society’s general population.

Stare decisis is the rule that a decision made by a superior court is binding precedent which an inferior court cannot change and also states that a court should not overturn its own precedents unless there is strong reason to do so and should be guided by principles from lateral and inferior courts.

Title IV calls for the desegregation of public schools under the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Title VI ensures nondiscrimination in the distribution of funds under federally assisted programs under the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

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59 Kvale and Brinkman, Interviews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing, p. 326.


61 Ibid.


63 Ibid.
**Unitary District** is the status a school system achieves “when it no longer discriminates between school children on the basis of race” or when it affirmatively removes all vestiges of race discrimination of the formerly dual system.\(^{64}\)

**White Flight** is the departure of White residents from areas where non-Whites are settling.\(^{65}\)

**1963 Illinois Armstrong Act** forbids school construction or purchase of buildings which promotes segregation and calls for action to prevent de facto segregation and eliminate racial separation in public schools.\(^{66}\)

**Proposed Chapters**

Chapter I provides a brief introduction on the background of South Holland’s development and concerns leading to the desegregation case and discusses the purpose of the research and its significance to educational leadership practices. Limitations of the study, methodology, and research questions are also provided.

Chapter II provides a history of the development of the Village of South Holland, Illinois from its early Dutch beginnings in 1847 up to the period of 1967 when Dr. Charles Watts became superintendent of schools for South Holland School District 151. The researcher provided an overview of the major developments within the Village of South Holland and examined the religious influences that guided the transformation


from a rural community to a suburban setting. The researcher examined the development of South Holland School District 151 which include sections of the towns of the Village of Dolton, City of Harvey, Village of Phoenix, and Village of Thornton. The chapter concludes with the allegations of unequal treatment as perceived by the Phoenix parents of Coolidge School students as early as 1956 as their voices went unheard until the filing of the federal lawsuit in 1967.\textsuperscript{67}

Chapter III focuses on the leadership of Dr. Charles Watts who served as Superintendent of South Holland School District 151 for a period of one year from 1966 to 1967 and Dr. Thomas Van Dam who served as superintendent for a period of 20 years from 1967 to 1987. Through this study the researcher determined, according to primary source evidence, how the superintendents grounded their decisions within the prevailing social, political, legal, and/or educational conditions of the time. The researcher examined, according to primary source evidence, how each superintendent brought to the board an awareness of the prevailing social, political, legal, and educational conditions of the time as the rationale for the need to develop policy and/or make decisions. This case study identified how the board’s decisions, actions taken, and resulting changes created a new context for each succeeding superintendent to operate within. The researcher applied the leadership framework of Sergiovanni’s Five Sources of Authority by identifying words and actions of the superintendents that support a source of authority. The researcher also identified the values represented in the board’s enacted policies

\textsuperscript{67} Van Dam, \textit{Who’s First on the Bus.}
and/or decisions in response to the superintendent’s contextual descriptions of the district’s needs.

Chapter IV focused on the leaderships of Dr. Janice Potter who served as superintendent of South Holland School District 151 for a period of two years from 1987 to 1989; Mrs. Jessica Buckner who served as superintendent for a period of five years from 1989 to 1994; Mr. Berthard Mitchell, Jr. who served as superintendent for a period of three years from 1994 to 1997; and Dr. Douglas Hamilton who served as superintendent for fifteen years from 1998 to 2012. Through this study the researcher determined, according to primary source evidence, how the superintendents grounded their decisions within the prevailing social, political, legal, and/or educational conditions of the time. The researcher examined, according to primary source evidence, how each superintendent brought to the board an awareness of the prevailing social, political, legal, and educational conditions of the time as the rationale for the need to develop policy and/or make decisions. This case study identified how the board’s decisions, actions taken, and resulting changes created a new context for each succeeding superintendent to operate within. The researcher applied the leadership framework of Sergiovanni’s Five Sources of Authority by identifying words and actions of the superintendents that support a source of authority. The researcher also identified the values represented in the board’s enacted policies and/or decisions in response to the superintendent’s contextual descriptions of the district’s needs. The conclusion of this chapter addressed the current status of the court ordered desegregation in South Holland School District 151.
Chapter V represents the summary and conclusion including implications for educational leadership and recommendations for further research. The researcher provided a summary and analysis of how the superintendents, according to primary source evidence, grounded their decisions within the prevailing social, political, legal and educational conditions of the time. The researcher examined, according to primary source evidence, how each superintendent brought to the board an awareness of the prevailing social, political, legal, and/or educational conditions of the time as the rationale for the need to develop policy and/or make decisions. This historical documentary analysis identified how the board’s decisions, actions taken, and resulting changes contributed to a new environment for each succeeding superintendent to operate within. The researcher applied the leadership framework of Sergiovanni’s Five Sources of Authority by identifying words and actions of the superintendents that support a source of authority. The researcher also identified the values represented in the board’s enacted policies and/or decisions in response to the superintendents’ contextual descriptions of the district’s needs. This analysis was conducted for each superintendent.
CHAPTER II
THE HISTORY OF SOUTH HOLLAND, ILLINOIS, 1847-1967

Chapter II provides a history of the development of the Village of South Holland, Illinois from its early Dutch beginnings in 1847 up to the period of 1967 when Dr. Charles Watts became superintendent of schools for South Holland School District 151.

The researcher provided an overview of the major developments within the Village of South Holland and examined the religious and political influences that guided the transformation from a rural community to a suburban setting. The researcher examined the development of South Holland School District 151 which includes sections of the Village of South Holland, Village of Dolton, City of Harvey, Village of Phoenix, and Village of Thornton. The chapter concludes with the details of the allegations of unequal treatment as perceived by the Phoenix parents of Coolidge-Kennedy School students as early as 1956 as their voices went unheard until the filing of the federal lawsuit in 1967.

Economic Development of South Holland

The purchase of 300 acres of land in Thornton Township in 1847 by Hendrik de Jong represents the beginning of the community known as South Holland located approximately 20 miles south of Chicago.¹ Hendrick de Jong and his wife Geertje (de Vries) and their 12 children became the first settlers in what was called De Laage Prairie,

also known as Low Prairie.\textsuperscript{2} He was followed by Antje Paarlberg who settled there later in the same year.\textsuperscript{3} North of Low Prairie was another Dutch settlement located on higher ground called De Hooge Prairie or High Prairie now known as the Roseland neighborhood of Chicago.\textsuperscript{4} Where High Prairie’s economic development was based on industry, Low Prairie’s economic development was based on agriculture. The economic life of Low Prairie prospered between 1853 and 1894 due to the effects of the Civil War, local market for the Dutch farmers’ specialty crops, and the construction of railroads throughout the village.\textsuperscript{5} The Dutch who began farming in Low Prairie raised general agricultural crops of corn, wheat, and hay. With the growth of Chicago and the need to feed the populace, the farmers turned to growing vegetables and fruits and selling them at the South Water Street Produce Market (see Figure 3).\textsuperscript{6}

South Holland farmers prospered due to the specialty nature of their crops, which were always in demand by the local Chicago market.\textsuperscript{7} In 1853 farmland sold for $10 an acre and by 1874 the price had risen to $150 to $200 an acre.\textsuperscript{8} It was the onion set introduced by a German farmer Charles Waterman, which brought great wealth to the

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{3}Ibid.


\textsuperscript{6}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{7}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{8}Ibid.
Low Prairie Dutch farmer.\textsuperscript{9} Between 1853 and 1880 four rail companies: The Illinois Central Railroad, the Panhandle Railroad, the Eastern Illinois Railroad and the Chicago and Grand Trunk Railroad all laid track in or around the town of Low Prairie contributing to its economic growth.\textsuperscript{10}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{south_holland_farmer_1850s.jpg}
\caption{South Holland Farmer, 1850s. Images of America. South Holland, C. Steinweg, 2003. Photo from South Holland Historical Society from the collection of Dr. C. Walvoord.}
\end{figure}

\textit{Figure 3.} South Holland farmer visit to South Water Street market in 1850s

During the 1870s and 1880s, farmers across the nation were affected by high rates charged by the railroads as well as low prices for their crops due to overproduction. The South Holland Dutch farmer was not affected by these factors due to their proximity to the local market and ability to transport their vegetables and fruits by horse and wagon.\textsuperscript{11} In 1869 Pieter De Jong petitioned for a post office (see Figure 4) in his general store and the following year the government consented, which resulted in the name of the village to

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{11} Cook, \textit{South Holland Illinois}.
officially change from Low Prairie to South Holland, Illinois. In 1874 a second general store was added along with two stroopfabrieken or syrup presses operated by Jakob de Vries and Teunnis de Jong. In 1880 the Wausau Lumber and Coal Company opened in the center of the village near the Chicago and Eastern Illinois Railroad. The Village of South Holland was incorporated under the statues of the State of Illinois in 1894. The railroad’s importance to South Holland came in the form of serving as the distribution center of the United States for the onion set. By the end of World War II, the South Holland farmer was raising over 1.5 billion pounds of onions (see Figure 5) at a value of approximately $30,000,000 to $40,000,000 a year. Charles Waterman, who introduced the onion set to South Holland Dutch farmers, went on to found the South Holland Trust and Savings Bank in 1911 with less than $50,000 in capital. By 1965 the bank’s assets rose to $24,000,000.

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12 Ibid.
13 Ibid. p. 62
14 Ibid. p. 62.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
The Dutch immigrated to America in the 1840s because of doctrinal differences within the national Reformed Church in the Netherlands. They brought with them their Netherland religious beliefs that include pietism and doctrinal traditions. The pious

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19 Ibid., p. 49.
gathered with a local teacher for private devotionals and teachings asking that the people abstain from strong drink, card playing, going to dances, theatres, and fairs.\textsuperscript{20} The doctrinal aspect asks its followers for their complete belief in the Old and the New Testaments as a means to insulate them from theological liberalism and ecclesiastical power struggles.\textsuperscript{21}

In 1848 the Low Prairie Church is formed and is later known first as the Reformed Protestant Church, then First Dutch Reformed Church, and finally the First Reformed Church of South Holland.\textsuperscript{22} The end of the American Civil War marked the beginning of changes due to the Americanized ways within the Reformed Church of South Holland. Three additional churches were formed prior to 1900; Thorn Creek Reformed Church of South Holland, Swedish Evangelical Mission Church, and the First Reformed Church of South Holland.\textsuperscript{23} By 1967, eleven additional churches are formed within the community of South Holland.\textsuperscript{24}

The first South Holland Village Board election in 1894 passed ordinances that prohibited the opening of saloons and that no person shall be allowed to give any concert

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{20}Ibid. p. 49.
\textsuperscript{21}Ibid. p. 50.
\textsuperscript{23}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24}Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
or entertainment within the Village of South Holland without a special permit from the president of the Board of Trustees.\textsuperscript{25}

A sociological study of the Village of South Holland conducted in 1939 by L. S. Dodson examined the institutions of the family, church, school, and monetary endeavors all of which were rooted in the culture of the Netherlands. Dodson states:

\begin{quote}
In South Holland, with its Dutch heritage and its self-imposed isolation, the church does not restrict itself to the spiritual needs of the individual villagers, but to a large degree dominates their day-to-day living as well. It is the center of the religious, the educational, and the social life of the South Hollanders. Observance of holidays, Sundays, baptisms, marriages, deaths; participation in clubs, school organizations, and general social activities; the teaching of a belief in the family hearth, spiritual satisfaction, and a rigid moral code – through such influences the church spreads its doctrine of living over the home, the school, and the individual until it encircles and directs the very activities and purposes of the community itself.\textsuperscript{26}
\end{quote}

Dutch residents of South Holland resisted social change with the banning of commercial amusements, golf courses, Sunday amusements, and saloons.\textsuperscript{27} Concern was raised by Dodson regarding how long the Village of South Holland could maintain its rural, Calvinistic identity and self-determination in face of powerful social forces stating:

\begin{quote}
It is true that cultural diffusion is taking place between South Holland and Chicago. But somehow, the village has retained its power of self-determination to a marked degree, choosing those goods, services, and
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
subtler influences from the city that it can utilize while repelling those it
disfavors. This conflict between ruralism and urbanism has gone on in
South Holland, consciously or unconsciously, for three generations.\textsuperscript{28}

However, they did not resist the coming of the automobile when the First Reformed
Church had the horse and carriage barn removed. Women were finally allowed to
participate and vote at congregation meetings by 1942.\textsuperscript{29}

The Dutch immigrants that settled in Chicago were passive as voters, who minded
their own business and seldom ran for office themselves, unlike the Dutch of South
Holland and Roseland who were Republican and became a stronghold of Republicanism
in Democratic Cook County.\textsuperscript{30} After World War II, South Holland began to see the
influx of Chicagoans seeking to leave the troubles of urban living behind them and settle
in a suburban location with the convenience of Interstate Highways 57 and 94 available.\textsuperscript{31}

During the 1950s and 1960s many of the Dutch from the south side sections of
Englewood, Riverdale and Roseland, moved to South Holland because of changing
demographics and declining industries and commercial businesses taking place within
their communities.\textsuperscript{32} Since South Holland’s incorporation as a village in 1894, only
Dutch-Americans have held the mayoral office in an unbroken string up to the present

\textsuperscript{28}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{29}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{30}Swierenga, Dutch Chicago.
\textsuperscript{31}Van Dam, Who’s First on the Bus.
\textsuperscript{32}Ibid.
day (see Figure 6). James Gouwens and Harold Gouwens were uncle and nephew, respectively, and between the two, served over fifty years as mayors of South Holland. The current Mayor, Don DeGraff (see Figure 7) has served the Village of South Holland since 1995.

Figure 6. South Holland Mayors 1894 to 1994

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33Cook, *South Holland, Illinois*. 
Figure 7. South Holland Mayor, 1995 to present

In the April 2005 election, Mayor DeGraff received 92% of the vote against challenger Robert Shaw, an African American who received 6.2% of the vote with a third candidate receiving less than 2% of the vote. The Village of South Holland has a population of 22,030 citizens comprised of 15% White, 74% African American, 6% Hispanic and 5% Other. The Village of South Holland’s website outlines their distinctive traits: Quiet Sundays, No Liquor, No Pornography, Single Family Homes, Well-Maintained Homes, and a Community of Churches.

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Development of the South Holland Schools

The first one room South Holland School was built in 1854 on West 159th Street which paved the way for the formation of South Holland School District 151, township 36, range 14. It served the children of South Holland until 1884 when it was replaced by a two room structure on the same site and named the Gouwens School after John C. Gouwens who served the district as a member of the board of education for many years.\(^{37}\)

In 1893 the Village of South Holland built the South Holland Public School located at 320 East 161st (see Figure 8). The South Holland Public School building was used until the new Roosevelt School was built on the same site in 1931. In 1905, the North Branch School was built and then abandoned in 1931 as students were transferred to the new Roosevelt School. The North Branch School then became the home of the American Legion until it disbanded in the late 1940s and was purchased by the village for use as a park building located by Van Oostenbrugges Park.\(^ {38}\)

The South Holland School District 151 Board of Education built schools based on the neighborhood concept opening the Roosevelt School in 1931, named after President Theodore Roosevelt. In 1933, Coolidge School, named after President Calvin Coolidge, was built at 155th and 7th Avenue in Phoenix. In 1956, the board and the voters approved the building of Madison School to relieve the overcrowding at Roosevelt School.\(^ {39}\)

Madison School opened in 1958 and is located at 157th and Orchid Drive in South Holland.

\(^{37}\)South Holland Historical Society Archives Collection, South Holland, Illinois.

\(^{38}\)Ibid.

\(^{39}\)South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, December 3, 1956.
Holland. Another neighborhood school was needed by the district in 1960 so the board approved the building of Eisenhower School, named after President Dwight D.

Eisenhower, and located at 160th and Minerva in South Holland. In 1965 the school board approved the building of the Kennedy School adjacent to the original Coolidge School in Phoenix and together they were called Coolidge-Kennedy School. The final building constructed in School District 151 was the Taft School located at 393 E. 163rd Street in the Harvey Highlands area and was built at the same time the Kennedy addition was added to Coolidge School. The building of the Kennedy and Taft Schools was not without controversy, as the residents of Harvey did not want to have to take the overflow of Phoenix students attending Coolidge School. The residents of Phoenix wanted the school board to address integration, while the board of education continued to maintain

\[\text{Figure 8. South Holland Public School built in 1893}\]

\[\text{South Holland Public School built in 1893 and used for 38 years until it was replaced by the larger Roosevelt School built in 1931.}\]
\[\text{Images of America, South Holland, C. Steinsweig, 2003. Photo from South Holland Historical Society from the collection of Dr. C. Walvoord.}\]

\[^{40}\text{South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, April 4, 1960.}\]

\[^{41}\text{South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, April 26, 1965.}\]

\[^{42}\text{South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, October 7, 1963.}\]
their policy of building neighborhood schools contributing to the de facto segregation of its students.

**School District 151 Phoenix Parents’ Charges of Unequal Treatment**

In November of 1956, a group of parents led by Mr. L. K. Watkins from the Phoenix School Citizens Committee filed complaints with the School District 151 Board of Education and the Assistant Cook County Superintendent of Schools regarding brutality, excessive rules, the grading system, and the type of education the children received at Coolidge School.\(^{43}\) Receiving no assistance from the School board or the Assistant Cook County Superintendent of Schools, the Phoenix School Citizens Committee organized a Coolidge School boycott.\(^ {44}\) The boycott prompted Mr. Noble Puffer, Cook County Superintendent of Schools and the School District 151 Board of Education to schedule a public meeting on January 30, 1957 with the parents and committee members, with the understanding that the children were to return to school.\(^ {45}\) The public meeting took place as the Coolidge staff looked on while the Phoenix parents were given the opportunity to state their concerns related to an inferior curriculum, incompetent and unqualified teaching staff, excessively brutal discipline, and the dismissal of two Coolidge teachers. On February 4, 1957, the South Holland School Board responded to the charges through a published statement addressing Coolidge School’s educational program as being equal to or better than that required by law; the

\[\text{\footnotesize \(^{43}\) Van Dam, Who’s First on the Bus, p. 33.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize \(^{44}\) Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize \(^{45}\) Ibid.}\]
teaching staff and administrators were qualified and certified; and the discipline of the students was in fact excessive, but the teachers were instructed not to repeat disciplining students in the same manner. The board did not dismiss the two teachers since they had not repeated the discipline behaviors in question.\textsuperscript{46} The board stated since the charges of brutality and excessive discipline had not been substantiated against the teachers and administrators, they were legally bound to continue to employ them.\textsuperscript{47} The Phoenix School Citizens Committee notified the Board of Education of South Holland School District 151 that they believed the decision did not serve the best interests of the children of the Phoenix community and was unacceptable.\textsuperscript{48} In 1957, the South Holland School District 151 Board of Education continued to segregate its students by approving the building of Madison School in accordance with their policy to place schools where the children live; ignoring Coolidge School’s student population at 99\% Black during the 1956-57 school year.\textsuperscript{49}

A review of court documents indicate that during the period beginning in the 1920s and continuing through the 1940s, White children living in District 151 in South Holland between State Street and 9\textsuperscript{th} Avenue attended Coolidge School. As the enrollment became increasingly African American, White children from this area were

\textsuperscript{46}Ibid., pp. 34-35.

\textsuperscript{47}South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, February 4, 1957. School District 151 Board of Education Statement and Decision in Regard to Charges and Demands Made by the Citizens School Committee of Phoenix, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{48}Van Dam, \textit{Who’s First on the Bus}, p. 35.

\textsuperscript{49}Ibid.
allowed to attend the Roosevelt School. In September 1956, African American Phoenix parents Mrs. Iola Toler, Mrs. Ellinson, Mrs. Steele and Mr. Bevins attempted to enroll their children at Roosevelt School due to the overcrowded conditions at Coolidge School and they sought a better education. The parents were denied enrollment because they lived in the attendance area for the Coolidge School and only those children from Phoenix that lived on the west side of the Grand Trunk rail tracks up to Highway 6 were allowed to go to Roosevelt School (see Appendix I).

On September 4, 1956 board member J. Tromp transferred his two White children out of Coolidge despite living within walking distance of the school and enrolled them in Roosevelt School. There was no written statement of attendance boundaries for District 151 schools prior to a resolution adopted on October 5, 1964 and again on September 6, 1966 at the time of the opening of the Taft School. African American board member L. K. Watkins voted nay on the October 1964 attendance area resolution while African American board member D. McGee abstained from voting on the September, 1966 resolution.

Funding concerns were raised in November 1958 with both the school board and the superintendent when the Office of Public Instruction for the State of Illinois inspected School District 151, citing the potential loss of state aid due to the low tax rate and

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51 Ibid.

52 Ibid., p. 52.

minimum expenditure spent on educating each child in the school district. Concerns were again raised in February, 1962 by Olin Stead, Director of Instructional Services at the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The district was operating on the tax rate of $0.75 established in 1948 despite an approximate 300% increase in enrollment. Additional revenue was needed if the district was to maintain a quality educational program and recommended that the board of education pursue bond issues and/or tax referenda. A list of recommendations to improve the educational opportunities of the school district was provided by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction:

1. Adopt sound budgetary procedures to assure patrons of the educational value of a comparable tax investment;
2. Keep records of accounts in the superintendent’s office;
3. Involve staff in selecting educational materials, equipment, etc.;
4. Increase the budget to purchase instructional materials to meet the minimum standards in the State Board of Education manual;
5. Employ a full time instructional materials coordinator, library and audio-visual aids, and supervisors of music, art and physical education;
6. Provide full time clerks for the principals;

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54 Van Dam, *Who’s First on the Bus*, p. 35. There are no board minutes for the 1958-1959 school year to determine the district’s response to the OSPI report.

55 Ibid., p. 36. South Holland School District 151 Notice of Special Election, December 5, 1964 notes the current tax rate for educational purposes was listed as $0.65 and not $0.75 as referenced by Van Dam.

56 Ibid.
7. As plans are made for additional facilities, consider locating all 7th and 8th
grade students in one building, where homemaking, general shop, etc, are
available;

8. Consider expanding the education program to include students at the
kindergarten level. 57

The State of Illinois Office of Public Instruction made its first recommendation to
consider establishing an integrated upper 7th - 8th grade center in 1962. 58

In June, 1963 the Illinois State Legislature passed the Armstrong Act which
forbids school construction or purchase of buildings which promote segregation and calls
for action to prevent de facto segregation and eliminate racial separation in public
schools. 59 The law was designed to prevent de facto school segregation because de jure
segregation was already prohibited by the Brown v. Board of Education decision of 1954.
The constitutionality of the Armstrong Act was confirmed by the Illinois Supreme Court
in 1968 in Tometze v. Board of Education of Waukegan City School District No. 61. The
issue surrounding the Armstrong Act was not about the Constitution requiring a local
school board to act to undo de facto school segregation but instead it was whether the

57 Ibid., p. 36.
58 Ibid., p. 37.

Constitution permits, rather than prohibits, voluntary state actions aimed toward reducing and eventually eliminating de facto school segregation.\textsuperscript{60}

The South Holland School District 151 Board of Education approved a motion on June 3, 1963 to purchase property and build a school in the vicinity of Route 6 and Vincennes Road to address the need to relieve overcrowding at Coolidge School and discontinue busing from the Harvey Highlands to Roosevelt School.\textsuperscript{61} In October, 1963 residents in the southwestern part of the school district known as the Harvey Highlands protested a plan to build a school in their area to take the overflow Coolidge School students who lived in Phoenix. The Harvey Highland residents recommended to the board that boundary lines be changed so that each school within the district would be able to take their own students.\textsuperscript{62} In November, 1963 the purchase of the land for the school was approved despite the board receiving a petition of 700 signatures from the Harvey Highland community requesting that the overflow of students be distributed among the existing schools. The board proposed a bond referendum to seek approval of $485,000 to purchase property for the building of the new school and tabled the petitioners’ request. The board set January 11, 1964 as the tentative date for the bond referendum election.\textsuperscript{63} The January bond referendum did not pass according to court testimony by board


\textsuperscript{61} South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, June 3, 1963.

\textsuperscript{62} South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, October 7, 1963.

\textsuperscript{63} South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, November 4, 1963.
member Mr. Eli Bogolub. The bond referendum failed to pass again on February 1, 1964 as it was defeated, 418 yeas to 1,059 nays, and the board decided to table the purchase of the property.

Discussions between the board and the public continued regarding the building of school facilities. African American board member, L. K. Watkins, recommended a school site on the northeast boundary of the Village of Phoenix that children could walk to. This site would serve children of Phoenix and from the Roosevelt Country Run area east of Coolidge School. He proposed an integrated junior high school to serve all of the students in the district. This proposed site would help to relieve overcrowding at both Coolidge and Roosevelt schools. Further stating in his deposition:

First I said that we should build a school that would take care of not only the crowded conditions at the Coolidge School area but the entire district, and I felt that one school would take care of our problems and in the meantime integrate the district.

When Mr. Watkins was questioned as to what he was referring to when he used the word “integrate” he stated:

Integrate the children, and also make it possible to be more economical in operating the district. I didn’t think we could any longer afford building small schools all over the district and one school would integrate the students.

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64 United States of America vs. School District 151 of Cook County, Illinois, No. 17754, Excerpts from Testimony of Eli Bogolub, p. 512. The January 1964 board meeting minutes could not be located to confirm the results of the tax referendum.


67 Ibid.
Mr. Watkins was asked to clarify what he meant when asked about integrating the students, he stated: Yes, integrate the students racially and the teaching staff also.\textsuperscript{68}

The proposed junior high school would draw White students from Harvey and South Holland; and African American students from the Phoenix community. Board members expressed to Mr. Watkins that they doubted the residents would accept the junior high school. When questioned further regarding the reason why it would not be accepted, Mr. Watkins stated:

What the man said was that to ask the taxpayers to build a school in this area would not be supported because it meant bringing Negro children over to this area and he felt this would not be accepted by other residents in the other part of the district.\textsuperscript{69}

During the 1964-65 school year, Mr. Eli Bogolub, secretary of the South Holland School District 151 Board of Education, recalled discussion in executive session related to alternative proposals brought to the board to consider for the December, 1964 referendum stating:

Mr. Graf was of the opinion if we proposed a single school, it would be defeated just as badly as the original referendum in January of 1964; that our only hope of getting the referendum passed was to have two schools submitted.\textsuperscript{70}

Mr. Bogolub agreed with Mr. Watkins that building a single school would be more economical, however, upon discussion with members of the community he shared with the other board members:

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., pp. 371-372.

\textsuperscript{70} United States of America vs. School District 151 of Cook County, Illinois, No. 17754, Excerpts from Testimony of Eli Bogolub, p. 512.
I preferred personally a single school but I came to the conclusion after talking to friends and neighbors and conversations I had with other people in the community that they were correct, that a single school would not pass.\textsuperscript{71}

During the March 2, 1964 South Holland School District 151 Board of Education meeting, a letter from Board Member Koster, who was not in attendance, was read in support of building two schools; one in the Harvey Highlands and one in Phoenix for the lower grades. A motion was passed to consider the two schools as recommended with Board Member Watkins voting nay and Board Member Trump abstaining.\textsuperscript{72} The Board’s approval of the two school sites reinforced the district’s practice of de facto segregation including the segregation of the teaching staff. Table 1 shows the assignment of South Holland School District 151 full-time teaching staff by race for the period 1953 through 1967.

Mr. Bogolub suggested to the other board members the need to place Negro teachers in each of the White schools and several White teachers in the Coolidge School. This was an attempt to alleviate the criticism the board had been receiving from the Phoenix residents. The other board members agreed and directed the superintendent, Mr. Kingsland to try to obtain at least one Negro teacher for each of the White schools.\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., p. 516.
\textsuperscript{72} South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, March 2, 1964.
\textsuperscript{73} United States of America vs. School District 151 of Cook County, Illinois, No. 17754, Excerpts from Testimony of Eli Bogolub, p. 521.
The public continued to provide input to the board of education regarding the need for additional schools. During the May 4, 1964 school board meeting, Mr. Harper, president of the Village of Phoenix requested that the board, in their planning of additional classrooms for the district, consider building one school which he felt would
be more practical and allow for the integration of students within the district. Mr. John Hebert, a representative of the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) also attended the meeting and commented to the school board that he had not received a response to his questions previously submitted to the board at an earlier meeting and would resubmit them for consideration. The board acknowledged that they did not have the questions submitted previously to the retiring board.\textsuperscript{74}

During the August 3, 1964 school board meeting, Board President Richard Graf announced in open session that several days after the May 4, 1964 board meeting the District 151 Board of Education first learned that Mr. John Hebert of CORE and 50 citizens from Phoenix had filed a petition with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Ray Page requesting a hearing. The petition alleged that School District 151 segregated or excluded certain pupils, teachers, and employees in the district because of their race. The first hearing was held May 26, 1964 and was continued to June 29, 1964, according to the board:

Mr. Hebert, his attorney and witnesses were given every opportunity to prove their allegations and when the hearing was concluded they had not submitted (sic) the name of one teacher, pupil or employee who had been segregated or excluded from any school in our district because of their race.\textsuperscript{75}

The board was asked by the State Superintendent’s Office to discuss their differences with Mr. Hebert and resolve them through negotiations in hopes of deferring

\textsuperscript{74} South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, May 4, 1964. Researcher is unable to locate a copy of the questions submitted by Mr. Hebert in the school district’s documents.

\textsuperscript{75} South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, August 3, 1964
any final decisions by the state. The board felt the state should dismiss the petition because of the lack of evidence submitted by Mr. Hebert. The board also stated that they would meet with Mr. Hebert only if he withdrew his petition filed with the state. Mr. Hebert refused and insisted on the next hearing. The second hearing was held on July 31, 1964 with no resolution. Mr. Deffenbaugh, hearing officer from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction promised to review the complaint and render a decision in a meeting scheduled for January 1965.

The South Holland School District 151 Board of Education hosted a public meeting for several hundred district residents on September 10, 1964 to address the overcrowded conditions at Coolidge and Roosevelt Schools and the need for an increase in the education tax rate. The school district was listed as the sixth lowest in the county. The Chicago Tribune reported:

Racial undertones prevailed throughout the discussion. Negroes favor the construction of an upper grade center in the district. Whites proposed the building of two new elementary schools. The Phoenix residents are contending that Negro children are being kept in the Coolidge School, now seriously overcrowded, while White children are being transported by bus to the Roosevelt Schools although they live nearer to Coolidge.

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76 Ibid., p. 2.
The school board decided on the building of two schools. The decision to move forward to purchase land at 163rd and Union for the future Taft School and land adjacent to Coolidge School for the future Kennedy School to relieve overcrowding within the district was approved by the board on November 2, 1964. Board member L. K. Watkins again stated his preference for a location near State Street to service part of Phoenix and South Holland and voted no to the site adjacent to Coolidge School.\footnote{South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, November 2, 1964.} The board reviewed the resolution seeking a proposed tax rate increase and bond issue referendum to build the two schools and provide for additional building needs within the district. The referendum was scheduled to be held December 5, 1964. The board’s plan was to attend all PTA meetings, as well as any group requesting to have the board or any member of the board meet, and explain the bond issue and the tax rate increase.

The December 5th referendum proved to be successful for South Holland School District 151. The bond issue passed 1,233 yeas to 663 nays; while the tax rate increase, the first since 1948, passed 1,205 yeas to 693 nays. Residents in the Phoenix area overwhelmingly voted against both the bond issue and tax rate increase referendums as it did not address their concerns for an integrated school system.\footnote{South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, December 7, 1964.} Mr. L. K. Watkins expressed his thanks to the board for their cooperation during his tenure on the board of education but he chose not to run for re-election in April 1965. He stated it had been an
interesting and informative experience. Mr. Donald McGee of Phoenix replaced Mr. Watkins on the board of education.\textsuperscript{81}

A decision was to be made by January 1965 by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) regarding the petition originally filed by Mr. John Hebert in May, 1964 and continued to July 31, 1964 alleging that School District 151 segregated or excluded certain pupils, teachers, and employees in the district because of their race. Mr. John Vander Aa, the school board’s attorney made several unsuccessful attempts to contact OSPI and still had not received a decision as to the status of the hearing.\textsuperscript{82}

In June 1965 increased vandalism occurred at Coolidge School including broken windows, break-ins, and defacing of the building. The board sent home a bulletin asking the citizens of Phoenix to help reduce the incidents of vandalism at Coolidge School by keeping their children off the school grounds at all times, until further notice, throughout the summer break. Further stating:

\begin{quote}
Activities properly supervised by adults may be conducted on school grounds provided requests are submitted to and approved by the school board. When school resumes in the fall a program will be instituted in the school with the children in an effort to alleviate the problem of vandalism.\textsuperscript{83}
\end{quote}

The Phoenix residents in attendance at the June 21, 1965 meeting did not take kindly to the board’s directive to place Coolidge’s playground “off limits” after school

\textsuperscript{81}South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, April 5, 1965.

\textsuperscript{82} South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, January 4, 1965.

and requested a vandalism report for all the schools in the district. A Phoenix resident stated “One finds not only the Coolidge school off limits, but the whole of Phoenix, Illinois is off limits to the board.”

According to the July 6, 1965 board minutes, the board directed their attorney Mr. Vander Aa to contact Mr. Ray Page, State Superintendent of Schools requesting a decision as to the status of the hearing from May, 1964.

By September, 1965 the South Holland Board of Education continued its practice of authorizing the issuance of tax anticipation warrants despite having passed a referendum in December 1964. The district’s lack of funds was attributed to the low education fund tax rate of $0.75 in place since 1948. The $0.11 increase to the education fund that was passed in December still did not give the district enough money to meet increasing costs due to student enrollment, textbooks, supplies, and staff. The money for the construction of the two schools was approved by the voters through the sale of bonds; however, maintaining the buildings would require more operating funds. This was noted by Board President Eli Bogolub who stated that he wanted to alert the parents to the possibility of another educational tax rate increase the next year due to rising costs. On April 9, 1966 a tax rate referendum was defeated 225 yeas to 776 nays. The board recognized the need to make cuts in order to balance the budget including the release of staff and increasing book fees.

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84 Van Dam, *Who’s First on the Bus*, p. 42.


86 South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, April 11, 1966.
At the May 2, 1966 board meeting, board member Mr. Thomas Mulhern asked the board’s attorney Mr. John Vander Aa if he had ever been notified by Mr. Ray Page of the OSPI regarding the hearing of July 31, 1964. Mr. Vander Aa stated that a decision was to be given in January 1965, however he had never received a communication from Mr. Page in spite of several letters and numerous telephone calls requesting information on the status of the hearing.\(^8^7\)

A delegation led by Reverend Hester, a representative of the Phoenix Schools Citizens Committee, along with the Harvey Area CORE and the South Suburban Human Relations Council (SHURE) presented to the South Holland Board of Education a list of 11 demands at their May 9, 1966 board meeting. These demands were also shared with the State Schools Problems Commission. An excerpt from the three page letter states:

> Inasmuch as all past efforts through meetings with the Board of Education, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and various other channels have been totally ignored, we feel completely justified in making this one last attempt at a formal peaceful and morally just request for a solution to the problems of human relations in District 151. The demands are:

1. Integration of faculty throughout the schools in compliance with the School Code;
2. Integration of students in School District 151 in accordance with the School Code;
3. Busing of pupils to effect integration;
4. Revision of school boundary lines in accordance with the School Code;
5. Concern for School Code Section 34-22 in the selection/construction of schools;
6. Improvement of Coolidge school grounds, facilities to measure up to the other schools;

\(^8^7\)South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, May 2, 1966.
7. Adequate space and facilities for the EMH and TMH classes;
8. Adequate and qualified staff for the EMH and TMH classes;
9. Curriculum changes throughout the district schools to accurately portray the past and present role of the Negro in American Culture as permitted by School Code;
10. In-service training for all teachers in human relations;
11. Adequate guidance and diagnostic services for all students.  

The delegation requested that the board respond to their demands in writing by Friday, May 13, 1966. They stressed if the response was not received in the prescribed time or the answers were unsatisfactory, the delegation would be forced to take necessary action that could prove to be distasteful to all parties involved.  

On May 11, 1966 the board called a Management Committee meeting to respond to the demands presented by Reverend Hester. There were audience members consisting of both South Holland and Phoenix residents. The following represents the board’s responses:

1. Two black substitutes have been teaching in all the schools and the superintendent has been instructed to hire people based on their qualifications with no regard to color, race or religious affiliation.
2. This school district has not segregated students in any school on account of his color, race or nationality. In any area with expanding percentages of Negro population it is inevitable that a racial imbalance will result in certain schools. The district has followed a neighborhood school policy; if a child lives in the neighborhood of a school, he goes to that school.
3. Busing students solely to effect integration would be to exclude children from neighborhood schools solely on the basis of race. The Federal Constitution does not require integration – it merely forbids discrimination.

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88 South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, May 9, 1966. Letter received from Rev. Hester representing the Phoenix School Citizens Committee, Harvey CORE and South Suburban Human Relations Council, pp. 1-3.

89 Ibid.
4. Section 10-21.3 of the School Code requires attendance areas to be established which takes into consideration the prevention of segregation. Other factors must also be considered by a board of education: safety hazards, distance of travel, natural boundaries, maximum use of facilities. Attendance areas will be studied with the opening of Taft School and any adjustments that are needed will be made.

5. Section 34-22 of the School Code applies to areas in excess of populations of 500,000 and is not applicable to this district.

6. All schools in the district are maintained with uniform standards to the best of the board’s knowledge. Any extras in any school represent contributions by the P.T.A.

7, 8, 10, 11. The board agrees that space and facilities for special education classes, adequate staffing and qualified teachers, in-service training in human relations and the need for adequate guidance and diagnostic services are all highly desirable. However, with an education tax rate at $0.86 and the voters rejected the board’s proposal for $0.21 tax rate increase, there is no money available to develop these areas of education.

9. Section 27-22 of the School Code states Negro history is permissible. Section 27-21 states American History is mandatory. The board will take under advisement the feasibility of purchasing text books which include a history of the Negro race. Section 28-6 states that text books shall not be changed for five years, but may be supplemented.\(^{90}\)

The board’s written response continued to defend their position that the children of School District 151 were receiving the best education that could be provided with a limited educational tax rate of $0.86. They were not convinced that the children would receive a better education if the demands were met.\(^{91}\)

The following week on May 16, 1966 the Coolidge School was boycotted for three school days. There were less than fifty students in attendance. The Eisenhower school in South Holland was picketed by Phoenix students and parents. The Phoenix


\(^{91}\)Ibid.
parents stated that the purpose of the boycott was to draw attention to the need to integrate District 151. Several days later CORE was asked to submit reports on the School District 151 situation to the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and to the Community Relations Service of the United States Department of Justice.  

In response to the Phoenix Schools Citizens Committee complaint filed in May 1964 and continued to January 1965, Ray Page, State Superintendent of Public Instruction provided his ruling on May 26, 1966 regarding the Deffenbaugh hearing as to whether or not School District 151 practiced segregation as defined by the Armstrong Act. Upon review of the hearing, Mr. Page ruled:

The Phoenix area is a transition area that was approximately 5 per cent Negro in 1920 and is now approximately 98 per cent Negro. No cases were cited nor arguments made concerning the specific complaint and evidence introduced at the hearing. A consideration of all the evidence does not show that any child or teacher is segregated in or excluded from a particular school solely by reason of their race as charged in the Petition.

The complainants, who waited since January, 1965 for Mr. Page’s answer, were not satisfied with this decision and felt that the Office of Civil Rights should look into the

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92Van Dam, *Who’s First on the Bus*, p. 56.

93South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, April 13, 1966, In the Matter of Petition of Certain Residents of School District 151 of South Holland, Complaining of Segregation in the Public School System. This single typed undated page was located with the April minutes. It appears in the minutes as additional anecdotal notes and may have been misfiled.

situation and requested that the Department of Justice file suit under Title IV of the Civil Rights Act.\textsuperscript{95}

The taxpayers of South Holland School District 151 approved a tax rate referendum on June 11, 1966 with 720 yeas to 499 nays increasing the rate to $1.07.\textsuperscript{96}

The board also approved an attendance area resolution related to the new Taft School that stated:

\begin{quote}
The attendance unit of the Taft School is hereby established as being all that portion of the City of Harvey lying within said district also that portion of the Village of South Holland, Illinois, and the unincorporated area in said district lying South and West of the Grand Trunk Railroad.\textsuperscript{97}
\end{quote}

The attendance area as stated in the resolution continued to stay the same with the opening of the Kennedy School located adjacent to the Coolidge School in Phoenix. The Taft School was built to accommodate the White students living in the Harvey Highlands. The district continued to bus White students east of the Coolidge-Kennedy schools to the Roosevelt School in South Holland. Mr. Donald McGee of Phoenix was the only board member to pass on the resolution. The South Holland School Board continued to approve boundaries that restricted Phoenix school children to attend the Coolidge-Kennedy Schools.\textsuperscript{98}

\textsuperscript{95}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{96}South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, June 15, 1966.

\textsuperscript{97}South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, September 6, 1966.

\textsuperscript{98}Van Dam, \textit{Who’s First on the Bus}, p. 57.
On November 22, 1966, a meeting was held with Ray Page of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction which included School District 151 board members, Superintendent Kingsland, a representative from Congressman Derwinski’s office, Theron Johnson from the EEOP, and J. Avery Smith, Civil Rights Advisory Specialist. The focus of the meeting centered on alleged discrimination in School District 151 under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 filed by the South Suburban Human Relations Council and the Phoenix Schools Citizens Committee. A tour of the school district was conducted the previous day by J. Avery Smith and Ted Sennet, Civil Rights Coordinator, to view first-hand the accessibility to the students living within the established boundaries of the Coolidge, Kennedy, Taft, and Roosevelt Schools. The complaints alleged the following:

1. The attendance unit boundary lines have been set in such a way that White students living close to the all Negro school in Phoenix are assigned to attend an all White school in South Holland.
2. Negro teachers are assigned to the all Negro school in Phoenix and White teachers are assigned to the all White school in South Holland.
3. School buildings are being constructed in such a way to promote segregation by race.

The outcome of the meeting as reported by J. Avery Smith and Theron Johnson indicated:

The South Holland School District has located its schools in such a way as to maintain the district’s “neighborhood school” system; this has maintained de facto segregation with respect to the Coolidge-Kennedy schools. This situation seems to be a classical de facto segregation.

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situation in which there are no elements of racial discrimination which come within the purview of Title VI. We refer to it as “classic” because compact geographical attendance areas with rigid residential segregation produce their ethnic school pattern. Action in the past could have avoided this situation. However, there is no legal action which we can take in the matter.101

Mr. J. Avery Smith was candid in stating to the school district representatives and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction’s Office that:

    Even though Title VI may not apply, this matter would continue to be a constant source of discontent on the part of the Phoenix area residents and a constant source of educational problems and achievement deficiencies. The school representatives were advised that if they desired to take action to eliminate segregated schools, we would be glad to assist them with whatever resources the Office of Education has available.102

Mr. J. Avery Smith met with Mr. Michael Jr. Lightfoot, an attorney with the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department in the early part of January, 1967. Mr. Lightfoot had been assigned to Mr. J. A. Gross’ request for a Justice Department suit under Title IV. Mr. Gross was the co-chair for the Education Committee of the Harvey Area CORE and was part of the group that filed the request for a hearing with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction regarding their complaints of segregation within School District 151. Mr. Lightfoot informed Mr. Smith of the department’s concern regarding its reply to Mr. Gross for the following reasons:

    (1) because the request was not filed by a parent or group of parents as required by Title IV, and (2) if he is told that the complaint

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.
must be filed by a parent or parents, Gross will find someone who qualifies.\textsuperscript{103}

The South Holland Board of Education faced with the hostilities of the Phoenix community, concerns with the school programs expressed by new members to the community, report of low teacher morale, and the changes that would occur with the opening of the two new schools, contacted the Illinois Association of School Boards to conduct a survey of the district with recommendations to improve education in the district’s schools. A committee headed by Dr. Oscar Chute, retired superintendent of Evanston School District 65, was to prepare a report for submission to the board by February 27, 1967.

The Survey Committee recommended that the board give attention to integrating the schools so the effects of segregation would not deny children an equal opportunity to learn. Twenty-eight recommendations were provided which covered all aspects of school operations including a more effective use of facilities, update board policy manual, elimination of book and field trip fees, and place the executive and administrative functions in the hands of the superintendent through defined policy. The Survey Committee also recommended addressing the district’s financial problem by considering a township consolidation into a K-12 district with High School District 205.\textsuperscript{104} This did not satisfy the South Holland residents who wanted to maintain their local control and did

\textsuperscript{103}United States of America vs. School District 151 of Cook County, Illinois, No. 17754, Defendant’s Exhibit 55, Memorandum, February 3, 1967, p. 1426.

not want their children attending Thornridge High School which was in the process of enrolling Black Phoenix students for the purpose of integration.\textsuperscript{105}

The board of education, facing a financial and educational crisis, looked to new leadership as they approved a three year contract for Dr. Charles Watts as Superintendent of South Holland School District 151.\textsuperscript{106}

\textsuperscript{105}Van Dam, \textit{Who's First on the Bus}, p. 65.

\textsuperscript{106}Ibid.
CHAPTER III  
SUPERINTENDENTS 1967-1987  

Dr. Charles B. Watts 1967-1968  

On April 3, 1967, the board approved a three-year contract for Dr. Charles B. Watts as the Superintendent of South Holland School District 151, effective July 1, 1967 (see Figure 9). Faced with the challenges outlined in the February 27, 1967 Survey Committee report for District 151, Dr. Watts began to work on the concerns raised by sharing his ideas through letters to the board as early as April 1967 before being formally presented to the board on June 19, 1967. A major concern addressed in the Survey Committee report was the formation of an integrated upper grade center. As a result the board committed to attending workshops on the process of integration offered through the Administrative Leadership Institute at Northern Illinois University prior to Dr. Watts’ arrival. According to court documents, Dr. Watts was aware of the district’s limited curricular offerings, lack of staff specialization for the upper grades, inefficient use of facilities, inadequate funding, and the need for improved community relations.\(^1\) To address these concerns, he formed three advisory groups: School Community Advisory Council, Instructional Program Cabinet, and a Public Relations Committee. Dr. Watts also shared with the board a long-range plan for the continued operation and development of District 151. The general features of his plan included curriculum continuity,

innovation design, financial improvement, integration plan, district organization, technological advancement, facility development, community relations, and personnel enrichment.²

Figure 9. Superintendent Dr. Charles Watts at public hearing in 1967

At the July 24, 1967 board meeting, Dr. Watts reviewed tentative plans for the formation of the Integration Study Committee; identifying the committee’s specific purpose, membership, and procedural plans with target dates. Dr. Watts indicated that he would provide the resource information for this committee to address. The board stated, however, that the plan should be revised to include PTA members and two ministers, one each from Phoenix and South Holland as well as board recommended residents of

²South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, July 10, 1967, p. 3.
District 151 for the committee. Dr. Watts also discussed at this meeting the 1966-67 End-of-Year Finance Report Summary, stating the need for more specific administrative budget control and responsibility which the board approved.³

On August 2, 1967, Board Secretary Richard Graf sent a letter to Dr. Watts to share his thoughts regarding the Survey Committee Report findings, integration, and busing since he was unable to keep a scheduled meeting with the new superintendent (see Appendix I). Mr. Graf expressed his reason for being on the board was to assure the South Holland residents that they were represented on the board stating:

This in no way changes my thinking that regardless of the child, the location of the school or the attitude of the parents, we must provide adequate facilities and opportunities for education of all children. However, because of the attitude of the majority of the people in South Holland and Harvey, we will lose all support for the schools, both in finance and community effort. They don’t want the schools integrated. I see no reason myself for integrating the schools for the sake of integration…Busing of students to me is a terrific waste of money and time.

⁴

Board Secretary Graf continued to describe members of the Roosevelt PTA as a powerful group that would not stand for interference from “outsiders” and further commented on the potential lack of support for the district’s tax referendum from the parents of Madison and Eisenhower Schools should an integration plan be pursued stating:

This was the reason I had hoped we had gotten started first with our Community Advisory Council – and had it staffed with at least equal parts pro and con on the integration proposition. More important, our

community relations are at low ebb and, before we start any program and especially one as controversial as integration, we have a long way to go.5

Board Secretary Graf concluded his letter with a discussion regarding his recommendations for the Community Advisory Council and acknowledged Dr. Watts’ proposed code of ethics only to ask him to use subterfuge to manage a difficult Taft parent.6

Passage of the 1967 Tax Referendum

Dr. Watts reviewed with the board the financial situation at the August 7, 1967 board meeting commenting that the school district had inadequate funding and that a quality educational program did not exist in District 151. After commending the board for completing the recent survey conducted by the Survey Committee in February, 1967, he stated that District 151 was in the low 25% of the 119 school districts in Cook County due to the district’s inability to support education as it has only recently been able to secure an increase to the Education Fund tax rate after twenty years. Dr. Watts recommended that action be taken from a formal budget control standpoint and the Educational Fund tax rate be increased from $1.07 to $1.49 by means of two tax levy referendums. He proposed that the first referendum be for a $0.21 increase to be held prior to October 21, 1967 which the board agreed with.7

The School Community Advisory Council members, appointed by the board at the August 21, 1967 regular board meeting, included fifteen regular members and twenty-

5Ibid.
6Ibid.
7South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, August 7, 1967, p. 2.
eight ex-officio members. The School Community Advisory Council now included all board members, principals, PTA presidents, the teacher’s union representative, the board’s legal counsel and three additional community members. Members of the Integration Study Committee were also assigned to be a part of the School Community Advisory Council. The council’s role was to advise the superintendent and the board on long range plans, to improve the financial status of the district, to conduct an integration study to identify specific conditions where racial isolation is related to unequal educational opportunity, and the development of an Integration Action Plan.⁸

At the October 2, 1967 board meeting, Dr. Watts addressed the board and community members regarding the need for the $0.21 Education Fund tax rate increase proposed in the October 21 referendum in order to keep the district solvent for the next two years. He presented tentative plans for the projected additional local tax revenue and the projected program improvements that would be made with the additional funds. Dr. Watts commented that not only must the first increase pass to keep the district afloat, but a second $0.21 increase along with an increase in state aid would be needed to make any significant improvements in order to enter into a junior high program by the 1969-70 school year.⁹ The referendum passed 638 yeas to 362 nays.¹⁰

Dr. Watts continued to address the needs of the district at the October 23, 1967 board meeting regarding: lack of critical personnel; overcrowded classrooms at Taft

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⁸Van Dam, *Who’s First on the Bus*, p. 67.

⁹ South Holland School District 151 Board meeting Minutes, October 2, 1967, p. 2.

School; the inability of the district to secure and support a music teacher; vandalism at Eisenhower and Madison Schools; recruitment of junior college students to supervise district intramurals; secure an additional part-time nurse for 2700 students; support for two full-year Headstart Program classrooms at Coolidge School; and expand through secured state funding two additional social-emotional special education classrooms at Kennedy School. When questioned by a member of the audience regarding whether the full-time employment of a teacher at Taft School would ensure a full-time math teacher at the Roosevelt School, he replied “…this would not be possible… unless we combine in some sort of an upper grade program, there would probably continue to be insufficient upper grade instruction in many schools.”  

At the conclusion of the board meeting, Dr. Watts asked that a discussion be held regarding a future referendum. Board President Mr. Bogolub asked that it be postponed until the November 6 Regular Board Meeting. Board member Mr. Weir requested that Dr. Watts provide specific reasons why the second referendum was needed with facts easily understandable to the taxpayers.

Dr. Watts discussed a second Education Tax Rate Referendum proposal at the November 6, 1967 board meeting explaining that the additional $0.21 increase was needed in order for the district to maintain a minimal educational program and make certain limited improvements over the next two years in accordance with the Survey Committee’s recommendations. Any new tax rate approved would be effective for 1968 and not be collected until 1969; which would result in utilizing tax anticipation warrants

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.
in order to begin recommended improvements. Board member Mr. Wiersma moved for adoption of a resolution calling for an Education Fund Tax Rate Referendum to be held December 9, 1967.  

**Chicago Grasshopper Controversy**

On November 16, 1967 the School Advisory Council Committee met to review the plans for preliminary work on the long-range plans involving an integrated upper grade center. At the November 27, 1967 board meeting, held at Taft School with 150 parents and residents present, Board President Mr. Bogolub commented on the role of the board member as a representative of the entire community. He also commented on the procedure used to select the superintendent stating the board wanted a “dynamic man” who would run the district under the board’s supervision. Mr. Bogolub stated he felt Dr. Watts had done an outstanding job to date, however, he did not personally agree with everything Dr. Watts said. Mr. Bogolub also stated “Segregated education is not equal education. The country cannot physically or morally endure without integration.” The board president’s comments were a prelude to Dr. Watts having to defend himself for comments he made at the October 7, 1967 session of the Administrative Leadership Institute at Northern Illinois University. A copy of a taped speech he made was heard by members of the board and the audience in which he was alleged to have referred to the South Holland real estate brokers as “the Old Dutch” and “Chicago Refugees” or “Chicago Grasshoppers”, one jump ahead of the black plague, hopping from area to area. Mr. Bogolub resented some of the generalizations made by Dr. Watts and explained that

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13 South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, November 6, 1967, p. 3.
only the board could approve or authorize any of the superintendent’s plans or proposals and that policy decisions and new program decisions were made by the Board and not the superintendent.\textsuperscript{14} Board member, Mr. Graf made a motion that the board adopts a policy stating that (1) the board operates under the Neighborhood School Policy, (2) the board defends the Neighborhood School Policy, (3) the board continues to operate under the Neighborhood School Policy, (4) and this policy is to be included in the Board Policy Manual. African American board member, Mr. McGee voted nay on the motion stating:

Schools are the biggest business in the community. The community is not prepared for integration or segregation; like death, it is something I feel one can never be prepared for. I do not feel that there will be peace either way. We may have neighborhood schools, but would another neighborhood want our schools? There is no peace and harmony in any one situation – integration or segregation.\textsuperscript{15}

Dr. Watts is reported to have commented on the statements he made following the public’s hearing of the tape referring to South Holland as a very proud island of segregation that does not think it has any problems and would not change a thing. He stated and still believed the problem of segregation exists.\textsuperscript{16} The board minutes provide a narrative of Dr. Watt’s response to the board and audience members:

Dr. Watts stated that he regrets the board’s misunderstanding of his attitude about who is running the school district… Regarding the tape that was played, Dr. Watts explained where, to whom, and the reason for the Institute and its program. The content of the tape was a personal report presented to a working institute involving schools who had integration problems… He stated that an integration problem does exist and that the district has more than one community; in fact, of the total enrollment,

\textsuperscript{14} South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, November 27, 1968, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{16} Van Dam, Who’s First on the Bus, p. 68.
approximately 30% are Negro students. The schools could be integrated without additional funds. The matter of finances relates to teaching staff and not to transportation or building. The purpose of the School Community Advisory Council included the assignment to study and develop a proposed policy and plan for integration. It was also explained that the School Community Advisory Council was appointed by the board of education, and that meetings (held the third Thursday evening of each month) were open to the public.\footnote{South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, November 27, 1967, p. 4.}

According to the South Holland Tribune dated July 21, 1968, prior to Dr. Watts’ arrival, the South Holland School District 151 Board of Education had enrolled in the Institute for Administrative Leadership on Integration, a University of Illinois project funded by the federal government to study methods for integrating schools. The article stated:

Dr. Watts was assigned as a team representative of the district, and his participation drew fire from the community for remarks he made at an institute workshop. A village-wide scandal and some literature developed when a tape recording of his extemporaneous remarks was spirited out of the Institute office and copied.\footnote{South Holland Tribune, Dr. Watts resigns post, July 21, 1968. Additional references to board members and Dr. Watts attending school integration institutes are noted in the July 10, 1967, October 2, 1967, and October 23, 1967 South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes.}

On December 7, 1967 the local community paper, The Shopper, ran an opinion piece that expressed disappointment in Superintendent Watts describing him as a “bull in a china shop” for making irresponsible statements and engaging in name calling. The writer, Mr. Harold Pals, referred to the comments made by Dr. Watts at the October 7, 1967 Administrative Institute on Integration and comments he was alleged to have made at a Tri City Human Relations Council meeting referring to the South Holland
businessmen as “bigoted” and “highly materialistic.” Mr. Pals concluded his article by expressing his contempt for Dr. Watts and the board in asking for the second $0.21 tax rate referendum so soon after the first referendum stating:

Until Supt. Watts manifests a more responsible attitude toward the residents of his district and speaks with language which befits his office, I for one will not trust him to spend any more of my money. Therefore, I intend to vote “NO” on Saturday, December 9.  

The hostilities displayed by the public related to the comments made by board members and Dr. Watts at the November 27, 1967 board meeting coupled with the opinion expressed by The Shopper reporter, Mr. Harold Pals, contributed to the defeat of the December 9, 1967 Education Fund Tax Rate referendum with 477 yeas to 1,115 nays.  

Board member Mr. Louis Wiersma, read a letter at the December 18, 1967 board meeting that he had written to The Shopper newspaper in response to Mr. Harold Pals’ comments. Mr. Wiersma commented on the irresponsible behavior of village officials, newspaper representatives, and the general public for allowing themselves to be used by an unnamed individual bent on destroying Dr. Watts under the pretext of a debate over the question of segregation versus integration. Mr. Wiersma described how this individual obtained a tape recording of the October 7, 1967 Administrative Leadership Institute by lying to the Director of the Institute and then circulating copies of the tape, embellished with many rumors, and half-truths, to village officials and anyone who would listen. He further stated:

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Dr. Watts has been quite frank with the board, in my opinion, in divulging his views on integration. He has also demonstrated in a few short months a capacity for organization and administration which has been sorely needed by District 151… It was clearly stated at this meeting that the December 9 referendum has absolutely nothing to do with the question of integration. Mr. Pals attended this meeting…As a lifelong resident of South Holland, I have always felt that it was a first-class community in many respects. I cannot believe that the people of this community now want a third-class education for their children…Mr. Pals is a writer who is much respected in our community… A real understanding of the problems of our school district by someone in his position would be very beneficial. Mr. Pals might further consider running for a seat on the School Board… I believe the board members has (sic) a right to expect the support of the community…

Dr. Watts also commented at the board meeting on the reason the board agreed to seek a $0.42 tax increase in two phases. He stated that he did not invent the educational problems that last year a Survey Committee report sanctioned by the board, recommended many of the changes he has proposed. Dr. Watts went on to say that he felt badly about damaging information interjected into the referendum and apologized to anyone offended by the use of the terms “grasshopper” and “old Dutch” and stated, “I cannot, however, apologize for trying to move so quickly to do things that have been allowed to coast for many years.”

Proposed Integration Plans

The South Holland School District 151 School Community Advisory Council continued to conduct local school visits to become more familiar with the different schools’ program offerings. The School Community Advisory Council visited Everett

Ibid., p. 3.

Ibid., p. 4.
Dirksen Junior High in Calumet City and Canterbury School in Midlothian. Faced with overcrowded classrooms at Eisenhower and Madison Schools and the concerns raised by the Survey Committee report, Dr. Watts presented three alternatives to the 1968 Building Program at the January 8, 1968 board meeting. The first alternative, known as Alternative A would maintain the school organization exactly as they were, kindergarten through 8th grade, but would require additional classrooms at Eisenhower and Madison Schools due to overcrowding. The second, Alternative B, involved converting the Roosevelt School into an upper grade center for all 8th grade students and for 7th grade students from Madison, Roosevelt, and Taft areas. Coolidge-Kennedy and Eisenhower would serve all students kindergarten through 7th in their areas; Madison and Taft areas would be enlarged to include former Roosevelt area and would serve students in grades kindergarten through 6th. The third alternative, known as Alternative C, would convert the Coolidge School into an upper grade center serving all 7th and 8th grade students from throughout the district. The Kennedy building would continue to serve as a primary center, kindergarten through 2nd grade for the Coolidge-Kennedy attendance area. The remaining 3rd through 6th grade students would be reassigned to Roosevelt, Madison, Eisenhower, and Taft schools. A budget advisory committee was formed consisting of the superintendent, two board members and various district personnel, to address the district’s funding concerns related to the presented alternatives and increased transportation costs.23

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23South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, January 8, 1968, p. 3; Additional support details provided in United States of America vs. School District 151 of Cook County, Illinois, No.
A discussion was held at the January 22, 1968 board meeting on the building program alternatives previously presented. Board President Mr. Bogolub polled each board member for their reactions to the proposed alternatives. Board Members Wiersma, Gouwens, Weier, Davis, and Graf all supported Alternative A to be the most appropriate at the time. Mr. Bogolub favored Alternative B, while Board Member Mr. McGee favored Alternative C. Dr. Watts recommended Alternative C because it offered the best educational advantages, but he also noted Alternative B as his second choice while acknowledging that Alternative A would probably be most accepted by the community. Mr. McGee moved to table the decision regarding the 1968 Building Program alternatives and suggested that the public be made more aware of specific information regarding the alternative plans through newspaper coverage. During the same meeting, Board Secretary Mr. Graf reported on the Federal Bureau of Investigation (F.B.I) conducting an investigation of School District 151 on a complaint of a citizen concerning a violation of Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The board directed their attorney, Mr. Van Der Aa, to find out what questions were being asked and what answers were being given. Mr. Van Der Aa stated he would also solicit the assistance of Congressman Derwinski to find out more about the complaint. The board also requested that the F.B.I. conduct their investigation through the board and not through Superintendent Watts.24


During the February 5, 1968 board meeting held at Eisenhower School, the proposed alternatives presented by Dr. Watts were again discussed in front of a gathering of 400 guests. A flyer was circulated throughout the community inviting residents to attend the school board meeting if they were opposed to busing children for the sole purpose of integration. The concerned group of residents launched into a discussion of the cost of book rental fees demanding to know who has not paid and advocating that they buy their own books and let others do the best they can. According to the February 6, 1968 Dolton Pointer, Dr. Watts rose to his feet and sternly addressed the audience stating:

“This is a public school; this is a public school system; we offer education to everyone whether or not they can afford it individually, and I go on record as being for a public school system…that public education has made this country, and if we start trying to buy education individually, eventually none of us will have it.”

Dr. Watts was described as an impressive figure as he remained aloof while veiled insults and insinuations were directed against him throughout the evening. He faced the irate group stating:

I wish I had invented your problem, then I could have invented a solution with it. It’s costing you to maintain separate schools in this district, and you maintain them in opposition to the 14th Amendment to the Constitution.

Board President Mr. Bogolub stated that the discussion regarding the alternatives presented by Dr. Watts previously, generated several letters from residents of the


26Ibid.
Roosevelt area in opposition to Alternatives B and C as well as a letter from the Coolidge-Kennedy PTA commending the board and Dr. Watts for presenting alternatives to consider and expressing support for Alternative C. An additional alternative, requested by board member Mr. Weier, known as Alternative D was proposed in the event the district was unable to make any additions to any buildings or make any other changes in the organizational structure of the schools in the district. Alternative D would modify the attendance area boundaries between Roosevelt and Taft Schools and between Eisenhower and Roosevelt Schools to alleviate overcrowding at Eisenhower while utilizing available space at Taft. Dr. Watts commented that not any one of the four alternatives was ideal; however, he could not recommend Alternative D from an educational standpoint. After further discussion of the four alternatives, a motion was made to adopt Alternative D with board members, Mr. Graf and Mr. McGee voting nay. The motion passed.

Alternative D was rescinded at the February 19, 1968 board meeting as board member Mr. Wiersma proposed another plan that would maintain the attendance areas at Eisenhower, Madison, Coolidge and Kennedy Schools. The only change in attendance areas would be between Roosevelt and Taft Schools and would allow for the district to plan for an upper grade center and preserve their bonding power toward that purchase. A member of the audience presented the board a petition signed by nine hundred residents requesting that the board honor their stated board policy and return to the traditional neighborhood school concept for all children in the district. However, Mrs. Waterman, Vice-Chair of the School Community Advisory Committee Council reported that the

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members of the council endorsed the need for an upper grade center. Dr. Watts continued to provide positive feedback to the staff, board members, and community members through memos focused on board unity, community harmony and a fresh approach to the future; while board member Mr. Graf made a motion to move to dissolve School District 151’s association with the Institute for Administrative Leadership whose stated purpose is to provide guidance in moving towards an integrated school community. All board members voted aye, except African American board member, Mr. McGee who voted nay.28

During court testimony related to the desegregation hearing, Dr. Watts was questioned regarding the district’s primary need for an upper grade center based on the Survey Committee Report conducted February 1967 by a special committee of the Illinois School Board Association. When asked to analyze his preference for Plan C Dr. Watts stated:

The simplest way I would have of analyzing it would be to say that we now have some 21 regular classroom teachers who are working in Grades 7 and 8 in our five locations. By putting all of the seventh and eighth grade students and all 21 of these seventh and eighth grade teachers in the same location, we could expand the quantity and variety of the program offered to them. For example, we could utilize a teacher who has special background in French. We could utilize a teacher who has special background in Spanish…we could offer the kind of exploratory Spanish and French program that is quite customary in a majority of junior high schools throughout the country. We also could have had one of these teachers assigned full time as a music teacher whereas now we have no separate teacher teaching music throughout the district. We could have one of the teachers work part time in art.29

28 South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, February 19, 1968, pp. 3-4.

When asked to project what the racial composition of the student bodies at the various schools would be in the event of the adoption of Alternative C, Dr. Watts stated:

The upper grade center at Coolidge would represent the same approximate breakdown that the entire district population does. This would be approximately 70 percent White, 30 per cent Black. At Eisenhower, approximately 12 to 13 per cent Black; 87 to 88 percent White. At Taft School, approximately 69 per cent White, 31 per cent Black. Then at Madison and Roosevelt Schools, both would be in the neighborhood of 80-20, White 80, Black 20, give or take a few percentage points.30

When questioned about Kennedy School, Dr. Watts stated:

Kennedy would still remain 95 per cent Black and about 5 per cent White based primarily on special education enrollment. This is for grades kindergarten through 2.31

Dr. Watts was asked to share the board’s reservations regarding the Alternative Plans B and C, stating:

I would say for the most part Mr. Bogolub’s disagreement was that he felt plan B would perhaps be a suitable compromise that would give us educational advantages without so great a potential disruption within the community of community attitude. As I recall, Mr. Wiersma shared a similar viewpoint. As I recall, Mr. Graf and Mr. Weier expressed concern that this would not be acceptable enough to the community to make it desirable to implement at that time.32

Dr. Watts was questioned regarding his understanding of the comment made by Mr. Graf to mean regarding the plans lack of acceptance by the community. Dr. Watts replied:

30Ibid., transcript p.775, Appendix p. 494.

31Ibid.

32Ibid., transcript p. 783, Appendix p. 502.
That simply community reaction to the implications of these alternatives would be disruptive within the school district community...My assumption from being an employee and part of the time a resident within the community would be that this would involve increased bus transportation and also involve the integration of schools.33

Board President Eli Bogolub was notified in March 1968 by Stephen Pollock, Assistant Attorney General of the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department that South Holland School District 151 was in violation of Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution in the allocation of staff and students. The Attorney General’s office had the responsibility to take action to insure that School District 151 brought itself into compliance before September 1968. The district was required to submit a written plan by March 26, 1968 to eliminate racially identifiable facilities and staff before the start of the 1968-69 school year.34

During the March 4, 1968 board meeting, Dr. Watts reviewed the proposed district objectives to improve the educational program for the 1968-1969 school year. The objectives would serve as guidelines to help the superintendent and the Budget Committee to develop a proposed budget for next year. A local community organization called the Neighborhood School Committee was organized in support of the board of education and its stance on maintaining neighborhood schools. Board President Mr. Bogolub publicly stated his support for the organization and expressed his desire to join their committee. After Dr. Watts presented his recommendations regarding the 1968-1969 attendance areas, a member of the Neighborhood School Committee presented to

33Ibid., transcript p. 784, Appendix p. 503.

34Van Dam, Who’s First on the Bus, p. 71.
the board a signed petition with 550 names requesting the board honor their stated
neighborhood school concept for all children and that Alternative A be reconsidered.
Board member Mr. Wiersma moved to adopt that the current attendance area boundaries
be left in place with one change; reassign the area west of the C&E Railroad and south of
Route 6 to Taft School. The motion carried.35 The South Holland School District 151
Board of Education responded to Assistant Attorney General Stephen J. Pollack
requesting the need for more time to come up with a desegregation plan. The board
commented on a plan to make a definite start on desegregating the staff and completing
the desegregation within the next three years. Dr. Watts presented his proposal to
eliminate two district level positions (assistant superintendent and curriculum
coordinator) and three principal positions due to budget cuts. He explained that
Eisenhower and Taft Schools would be under one principal; Coolidge and Kennedy
Schools would be under one principal; Madison and Roosevelt would be under one
principal with a half-time assistant principal in each building. The board supported Dr.
Watts’ recommendations and approved the proposal.36

The South Holland Board of Education met as a Committee of the Whole on
March 25, 1968 to discuss recommendations related to the 1968-1969 attendance areas
and to determine student assignments. Board President Bogolub suggested that an
opinion poll be conducted during the April 13, 1968 board elections to determine the
percentage of the population in favor of an upper grade center. Dr. Watts was directed to

35South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, March 4, 1968, pp. 1-5.
36South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, March 18, 1968, pp. 2-3.
consult with Mr. Van Der Aa, the board’s attorney regarding the opinion poll. The School Community Advisory Council prepared a written statement in support of an upper grade center. Board President Mr. Bogolub discussed the possibility of the Justice Department stopping any building additions to the Eisenhower School and possible penalties for not being in compliance with the Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The board would be faced with the loss of federal aid of approximately $45,000 and/or additional fines and imprisonment of board members and administrators.

The committee also discussed long range plans addressing future building needs including the purchase of two new sites to satisfy the requirements of an upper grade center and/or relieve overcrowding. According to the minutes of the Committee of the Whole meeting, the board members went on record expressing their thoughts regarding the district’s need for an upper grade center: Mr. Gouwens stated “Several years off, but have to think about it now in our long-range planning;” Mr. Wiersma, “Something that requires a great deal of long-range planning so we don’t create a monster for ourselves…something that can be afforded and we have a massive selling problem with the people in this District;” Mr. Weier, “Knows that from all information he has read there has been very little in publications to school board members that an Upper Grade Center is not a good thing…our district cannot afford to go into an Upper Grade Center program…Upper Grade Center is coming, when I don’t know, but it will be up to the public to determine if they want to support this;” Mr. Davis, “In favor of upper grade center…children deserve as good a chance as they can possible get;” Mr. Graf, “Anyone
interested in school administration should recognize that an upper grade center is a recognized fact…teachers are specializing and interested in teaching only in a specialized field;” Mr. McGee stated he “Does not like to wait until we think it is feasible before we work for what we want;” and Mr. Bogolub stated he was “In favor of an upper grade center.”

The assassination of civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, on April 4, 1968 generated an outpouring of grief and rage as riots erupted in Chicago’s West side and in pockets of Black communities located on the south side and near north side. During the April 8, 1968 regular board meeting, African American board member, Mr. McGee, motioned to approve the closing of the district’s schools on April 9, 1968 in honor of Dr. King. The motion passed.

Superintendent Watts reported that he had not received any further communication from the Justice Department nor had he seen the letter from the district’s legal counsel to the Justice Department as requested previously by the board. Dr. Watts was informed by board member Mr. Graf that a letter had already been sent to the Justice Department from Mr. Van Der Aa, the board’s counsel. Mr. Van Der Aa also requested State Superintendent Ray Page and Representative Hanrahan to assist the school district

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39 South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, April 8, 1968, pp. 2-5.

40 Ibid.
in its response to the U.S. Assistant Attorney General’s request to submit a plan to eliminate racially identifiable facilities and staff by March 26, 1968.\footnote{Van Dam, \textit{Who’s First on the Bus}, p. 72.}

During the April 22, 1968 board meeting, the results of the April 13, 1968 opinion poll in reference to the establishment of an upper grade center indicated 1,229 votes against the center and 950 in favor. The School Community Advisory Council questioned whether they had lost their credibility as a result of the poll and requested that the board dissolve the council which they agreed. African American board member, Mr. McGee and White board member, Mr. Bogolub lost the April 13 reelection of their seats on the board to two White candidates, Mr. Gerald Bennett and Mr. James Hendrix who were endorsed by the Neighborhood Schools Committee. The Neighborhood Schools Committee was organized to work towards five objectives: 1) To maintain and strengthen the neighborhood school policy; 2) to strongly protect against any plan to bus children throughout the district for the sole purpose of integration; 3) to make their convictions known to the elected school board and the superintendent; 4) to keep each other mutually informed of plans and developments in the district; and 5) to promote better education for all the children in District 151 regardless of race or religion.\footnote{An Open Letter to Residents and Supporters of School district 151 from the Neighborhood Schools Committee, \textit{The Shopper}, July 18, 1968. This article noted the support of the two board candidates who won in the April 13, 1968 board elections.}

Dr. Watts stated at the board meeting the need to move to a building program immediately or it would be necessary to purchase classroom trailers by June 1, 1968.

Board attorney, Mr. Van Der Aa stated there was no market for the sale of bonds at the
present 4½% interest rate and recommended that the board go to the residents to authorize an increase in the interest rate so that bonds could be sold. Mr. Wiersma requested that the board approve the bond funds for the acquisition of sites in an amount not to exceed $145,000. Mr. Graf also recommended that the board seek approval of a $0.21 Educational Tax Rate increase to take place on May 25, 1968. ⁴³

**Board and Community Response to Civil Action Complaint 68C755**

On April 25, 1968, South Holland School District 151 was officially cited by U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, with Civil Action Complaint 68C755. This action cited the need for staff desegregation and indicated that a complaint was also being considered that cites African American children as being deprived of equal protection under the law. Dr. Watts was informed by Assistant Attorney General Stephen Pollack that student assignment and school construction was in violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the 14ᵗʰ Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The board had until May 15ᵗʰ to submit a plan to correct the violations. ⁴⁴ The *New York Times* reported the story on April 26, 1968 noting South Holland School District 151 as the first northern school to face forced desegregation of their school system. Dr. Watts is quoted in the article stating: “…he believed court action was inevitable since the seven member all-White school board last rejected Feb. 12 his proposal for integrating and improving the system.” ⁴⁵

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⁴³South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, April 22, 1968, pp. 2-7.

⁴⁴Van Dam, *Who’s First on the Bus*, p. 72.

On April 29, 1968 a special meeting was called by Board Secretary Mr. Richard Graf and Board Members Mr. Gerald Bennett and Mr. James Hendrix to discuss and take action on the suit filed by the U.S. Department of Justice against the school district. The three board members notified the South Holland Tribune and delivered a copy of the special meeting notice to the other board members, Dr. Watts, and the board’s attorney, Mr. Van Der Aa. The Justice Department complaint was read aloud by Mr. Graf. Mr. Hendrix moved to have the meeting withdraw to Executive Session to discuss action to be taken by the district. Board President Mr. Weier stated Executive Session should include only the board of education and the district’s legal counsel excluding the superintendent. A resolution was approved by the board requesting Cook County Superintendent and the State of Illinois School Superintendent to assist the district financially with their defense. Dr. Watts submitted a written protest from being excluded from the April 29 Executive Session since he was also named a defendant in the case. Mr. Van Der Aa stated that Dr. Watts was improperly listed as a defendant and appropriate action would be taken to have him dismissed from the case. The board agreed that the board president and the district’s legal counsel would speak on behalf of the board of education.46

Board members Mr. Gouwens and Mr. Weier both resigned from the board at the May 6, 1968 regular board meeting due to health concerns and increased business pressures, respectively. Former board member, Mr. McGee and Mr. Harold Krillic were appointed to fill the vacancies that same evening. Mr. Gouwens and Mr. Weier were

included in the original April 25, 1968 complaint filed by the Justice Department against
the board of education and were called to testify during the trial. Mr. McGee and Mr.
Krillic were included in the amended complaint of May 27, 1968 filed by the Justice
Department against the board of education and also provided testimony. During the
meeting, Dr. Watts asserted his inclusion in the Justice Department’s suit against the
district and stated that his legal counsel advised him that there was little chance he would
be excluded from the charges. Dr. Watts informed the board that he had a
recommendation to present to the board that would comply with the Justice Department’s
directive for a plan to be submitted by May 15. His plan hinged on what was best for the
education of youngsters and the U.S. Constitution. The board’s legal counsel, Mr. Van
Der Aa, stated that at the last special meeting on April 29, the board adopted a resolution
which reserved all planning, solutions, and defenses to the board of education and its
appointed legal counsel. Mr. Van Der Aa advised the board not to hear the
recommendations Dr. Watts prepared. Dr. Watts responded this was a “derogatory
reflection on the administration, the board, and the community.” Board member
Mr. McGee inquired what fund would be used to pay the costs in defending the suit. Mr.
Van Der Aa stated the funds would come from the education fund adding that the County
Superintendent had already indicated that he would not be interested in aiding because he
was not named a party to the case. A parent from the Eisenhower area stated at the board
meeting:

I share the embarrassment that the board of education must feel for being
singled out as the school district is in violation of the Civil Rights Act of
1964…am very much distressed at continued delay on the part of the
school board and the attorney…would urge that the school board reconsider but not in illegal secret sessions, or in quickly held meetings where people could not have 24-hour notice…ask that the board consider integrated junior high to allow for enriched program…urge board to hear rather than to muzzle the superintendent.  

The board received voluntary contributions from district residents to support the board’s defense of the lawsuit. Mr. Wiersma stated at the May 20, 1968 regular board meeting that the board could not be bound in any way to anyone who made a contribution. A total of $1,139.50 in contributions had been received. A resident of the Madison School area asked the board if they were considering additional legal counsel as reported in the local papers. Mr. Wiersma stated that the firm of Ancel, Stonesifer, Glink, and Levin would be hired to defend the district, board members, and Dr. Watts. Mr. McGee asked for an update regarding the request for support from the Cook County Superintendent. Mr. Van Der Aa stated that the district received a decline from the Cook County Superintendent and was advised by the attorney for the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to seek a continuance which was granted. Mr. McGee expressed his concern that all board members be kept informed of all meetings and outcomes related to the lawsuit. Mr. Van Der Aa stated that the board president and secretary were advised and that there usually was not enough time to notify all board members. Former board member Mr. Bogolub recommended that the board consider adopting a policy related to

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47 South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, May 6, 1968, pp. 2-4.
creating formal procedures to appoint a board member and a second policy that clearly defined the role of the school board attorney.  

Board secretary Mr. Graf summarized the financial situation for the 1968-1969 school year and the importance of the May 25 referendum. Dr. Watts stated the need for all three referendum issues to be passed and urged the public not to vote based on any side issues. On May 25, 1968 the three referendum items: increase the interest rate on bonds issued in 1964, issue $145,000 in bonds to purchase land and improve sites for an upper grade center and K-6 school, and raise the Educational Tax Rate $0.21 from $1.28 to $1.49 were defeated.

On May 27, 1968, Board President Mr. Wiersma called a special meeting of the board to discuss the U. S. Justice Department’s filing of an amended complaint against School District 151. The original complaint filed in U. S. District Court in Chicago on April 25, 1968 charged discrimination in only faculty and staff assignments at schools in the district. The amended complaint included charges of discrimination against Negro students in the district and named defendants Superintendent Dr. Charles Watts and board members Richard Graf, Wallace Davis, Louis Wiersma, Gerald Bennett, James Hendrix, Donald McGee, and Hobart Krillic as being responsible for the operations of School District 151 under Illinois law. According to court documents the amended complaint

48 South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, May 20, 1968, pp. 2-5.

49 Ibid.

50 South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, June 3, 1968, p. 3.
identified as No. 68C755 listed charges against South Holland School District 151 in the following paragraphs of the complaint:

(7) The defendants have engaged in racial discrimination in the operation of School District 151 in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

(8) The racial discrimination alleged in paragraph 7 has included assigning faculty and staff members among the various schools of School District 151 on a racially segregated basis.

(9) The racial discrimination alleged in paragraph 7 has included segregating the students of School District 151 on the basis of race. Such segregation has resulted from, among other things: (a) drawing and maintaining attendance zone boundaries to promote and preserve the racial segregation of students; (b) constructing and locating new school facilities to promote and preserve the racial segregation of students.

(10) As a result of the policies and practices…six schools in School District 151 only White children attend the Madison, Eisenhower and Roosevelt Schools, and almost all of the children attending the Taft School are White…the Kennedy and Coolidge Schools, separate buildings located adjacent to each other, is almost entirely Negro.

(11) The defendants have failed to take adequate steps to correct the racially discriminatory patterns of faculty and staff assignments and student assignments and to insure that such assignments for the 1968-69 school year, and thereafter, will conform to the requirements of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

(12) The defendants have considered and are considering the construction of new school facilities…and the reorganization of the schools of the district, and have rejected educationally sound proposals which contemplate the desegregation of students.

(13) As a result of the acts and practices of the defendants…the defendants have denied Negro students in Schools District 151 the equal protection of the laws in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

(14) The Attorney General of the United States has received a complaint in writing signed by a parent of minor Negro children attending the public
schools operated by the defendants, alleging that said children are being deprived by the defendants of the equal protection of the laws.\textsuperscript{51}

Former board member Mr. Bogolub challenged the actions of the board’s attorney Mr. Van Der Aa at the June 3, 1968 board meeting. Mr. Bogolub, after reading excerpts of the March 18 and April 8, 1968 board meeting minutes, wanted to know why the board’s attorney did not follow the board’s directive listed in the March 18, 1968 meeting minutes directing him to reply to the Justice Department submitting a tentative plan and a request for additional time. Mr. Bogolub also asked why the board’s attorney had not sent copies of the March 26, 1968 Justice Department letter to himself (as the former board president) and to the Superintendent, Dr. Watts. Board President Mr. Wiersma commented that it would not have made a difference if a tentative plan had been submitted or not. Board Secretary Mr. Graf was asked by an audience member of his knowledge that a letter had been sent to the Justice Department before a copy was given to the board president and superintendent. Mr. Graf replied that he only knew that the letter had been sent. Board member Mr. McGee moved that a statement be given by Mr. Van Der Aa explaining his actions. Board members Mr. Graf and Mr. Hendrix did not support the motion.\textsuperscript{52} The motion passed and Mr. Vander Aa explained that decisions must be made in open session and the directive given in executive session was merely a narrative statement provided by Mr. Bogolub in open session. In regards to the letter sent to the Justice Department, Mr. Vander Aa stated it has been his practice to send

\textsuperscript{51}United States of America vs. School District 151 of Cook County, Illinois, No. 17754, Civil Action No. 68C755, Appendix Volume I, Amended Complaint, pp. 2-5.

\textsuperscript{52}South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, June 3, 1968, p. 4.
correspondence to the board officers and superintendent only and if the board wished to
change that practice, they should let him know. He did not address how the board
secretary Mr. Graf received a copy of the letter prior to the board president or
superintendent.\footnote{South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, June 10, 1968, p. 1.}
Mr. Wiersma addressed the board regarding their legal counsel’s
response to the May 27, 1968 amended complaint filed against the district by the Justice
Department. Mr. Wiersma stated that a motion was also filed to remove Dr. Watts as a
defendant in the case. The board’s legal counsel, in their response, denied that the
Attorney General had jurisdiction to order the desegregation of students and staff at
South Holland School District 151 based on the term “desegregation” as used in the Civil
Rights Act of 1964 and the court, therefore, had no right to grant relief at the request of
the Attorney General based on the following:

\begin{quote}
Title 42, Sec. 2000c, U.S.C., defines ‘desegregation’ means the
assignment of students to public schools and within such schools without
regard to their race, color, religion, or national origin, but ‘desegregation’
shall not mean the assignment of students to public schools in order to
overcome racial imbalance.”
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Title 42, Sec. 2000c-6, U.S.C., only authorizes the Attorney General to
institute an action where it will materially further “desegregation in public
education” and further provides:

\begin{quote}
Nothing herein shall impower (sic) any official or court of the United
States to issue any order seeking to achieve a racial balance in any school
by requiring the transportation of pupils or students from one school to
another or one school district to another in order to achieve such racial
balance.\footnote{United States of America vs. School District 151 of Cook County, Illinois, No. 17754, Civil
Action No. 68C755, Appendix Volume I, Answers to Amended Complaint, p. 23.}.
\end{quote}
The board’s attorney stated the Attorney General did not allow a reasonable amount of time to act voluntarily to address the conditions alleged in the complaint and denied racial discrimination in the operation of the school district further stating according to court documents referring to specific paragraphs of the complaint:

(8) Admit that with certain exceptions schools attended only or almost entirely by White students have predominantly White faculty and staff members and that schools attended only, or almost entirely by Negro students have predominantly Negro faculty and staff members, but deny the other allegations of paragraph 8.\textsuperscript{55}

In reference to the complaint alleging student segregation due to attendance zone boundaries and the construction and location of schools to maintain student segregation, the board:

(9) Deny the allegations of paragraph 9 thereof.

(10) Defendants admit that of the six schools in School District No. 151, only White children attend the Madison, Eisenhower and Roosevelt Schools, and the children attending the Taft School are predominantly White; defendants further admit that the enrollment of the Kennedy and Coolidge Schools…is almost entirely Negro. Defendants further allege that the make-up of the student body in said schools reflect the racial composition of the residents in the neighborhoods surrounding such schools.

(11) Deny the allegations of paragraph 11…Defendants further affirmatively allege that the teaching staff of School District No. 151 is being encouraged to voluntarily seek transfers which will have the effect of changing the racial composition of the faculties at the several schools within School District No. 151.

(12) Defendants…deny that they have rejected educationally sound proposals which contemplate the desegregation of students.

(13) Deny the allegations of paragraph 13 thereof.

\textsuperscript{55}Ibid., p. 26.
(14) Defendants are without knowledge sufficient to form a belief as to the allegations of paragraph 14 thereof.56

Board President Mr. Wiersma reported at the June 17, 1968 regular board meeting that Judge Julius Hoffman set Wednesday, June 19 to begin hearings on the government motion for a preliminary injunction to require the district to carry out certain actions by September, 1968. A member of the audience asked the board if they were considering any type of buildings for Eisenhower School to address its overcrowding. Dr. Watts informed the board that the district would probably receive a prohibitive injunction within 48 hours if relocatable classrooms were ordered for Eisenhower School since no building activity should be contemplated for as long as court action was in process.57

**Court Ordered Desegregation of School District 151**

On July 8, 1968, Judge Julius Hoffman (see Figure 10) ordered South Holland School District 151 to integrate its six schools in two steps beginning with the integration of Coolidge School as the district’s upper 7th and 8th grade center by September 1968 and Kennedy School and district staff by September 1969. Max Sonderby of the *Chicago Sun-Times* reported on July 9, 1968 Judge Hoffman’s comments “It is more than 14 years since the Supreme Court ruled that in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place.” Judge Hoffman stated “School boards and administrators have a moral and civic duty, as well as a legal duty, to end segregation.” Mrs. Buckner sat through two weeks of testimony and was present when Judge Hoffman


57 South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, June 17, 1968, p. 5.
Judge Julius J. Hoffman

Figure 10. Judge Julius Hoffman

ruled that School District 151 was guilty of de jure segregation. She described a young woman from South Holland who was a nervous wreck waiting for Judge Hoffman’s ruling. Once the young woman heard his decision – she fainted (Buckner interview, p. 11). Jerry DeMuth of the Chicago Sun-Times reported July 10, 1968, on the reaction of south suburban leaders including Phoenix Village President Frederick D. Harper, “We were powerless to do anything about this situation before. Now the courts have ruled and the decision will have to be followed.” Harvey Mayor James A. Haines said, “I’m glad that justice will finally be done. It’s a very good decision…Our two school districts, 147 and 152 have long been integrated.” South Holland Village President Harold Gouwens would not comment on the decision except to say, “It’s a very complex issue…presenting a plan by July 15 is rather short notice. When a move is made it should be the right move
and not made in haste.” Board attorney John Van Der Aa stated, “If the court meant that the neighborhood school is unconstitutional then this is bad for the country, not just for District 151.” In an editorial by the Chicago Sun-Times on July 10, 1968, Schools Should Lift up the Child, their response to Judge Hoffman’s decision is supported by their statement, “The classroom will not cure all society’s divisions. But it is in the classroom that children have a chance to overcome the narrowness that limits so many adults. And the adults, whether educators, or school board members or bystanders, have no right to steal that chance away.”

The South Holland School District 151 Board of Education met July 8, 1968, at the Eisenhower School to discuss the court’s ruling (see Figure 11). Board President Mr. Wiersma was absent from the meeting. Mr. Graf moved to accept the court order. Mr. Hendrix moved to authorize the board’s attorneys to appeal the case and petition the court for a stay of the order. Mr. McGee asked that the board consider the cost involved in this appeal. Mr. Krillic stated that members of the community were behind the board and that the cost of transportation was far greater than the cost of the appeal. Mr. Graf stated that the School Code delegated the right to boards to defend themselves from charges made against them and that the board should keep going until there was no place else to go. Mr. Davis stated in the interest of better education they could not afford to appeal the case. Mr. Bennett stated he wished to maintain the neighborhood school policy even though it would take money from the education…it is something we should fight to the
A motion was made to appeal the court ruling and request a stay of the July 8 order with board members McGee and Davis voting nay. The motion passed.\footnote{South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, July 8, 1968, p. 2.}

![Image of South Holland School Board meeting]

**Figure 11.** South Holland School Board appeal court order of July 8

Jimmie Dee McAdams, a reporter for the Dolton Pointer was present at the July 8 board meeting and reported on Dr. Watts’ treatment by community members as he expressed his opinion on the board’s decision to appeal the case stating:

> We said we weren’t going to discuss the suit…but since you seem to be anyhow, I’d like to speak…No! yelled a portion of the citizens…don’t let him talk and he’s not on the board, he can’t talk…As one of the eight people named in the suit…I would like to make a public statement. I do not personally favor an appeal…it does not deserve an appeal…it will divert our time and interest and money from it’s (sic) main purpose…this all could have been prevented.\footnote{J.D. McAdams, Dolton Pointer, *Dissenting Votes by McGee, Davis*, July 9, 1968. South Holland School District 151 Newspaper Archive Collection, Vol. 1.}
An editorial in the South Holland Tribune suggested that board members of School District 151 had gained a reputation for following what they think is their voters’ conscience stating:

Each must search his conscience and ask himself what is best for the education of all District 151 children – and not just some. If he was elected on a platform of ‘neighborhood schools’ (which is another way of saying segregation) then he is beholden to a certain group of electors…At no level of government do we need captive elected officials who are willing to disregard the law of the land to uphold a promise that could never have been given honestly. They are fighting for the right to run their own affairs, true. But in doing so and spending vast educational sums for appeal upon appeal, they are depriving 2,600 children in District 151 of a more important right – that of a decent, proper and sound education.60

Judge Julius Hoffman and the Appeals Court both denied the South Holland School District 151’s request for stay of injunction order and instead of submitting a plan by July 15 as originally ordered, the board was given until July 17, 1968. The board’s plan included the use of Taft School as an 8th grade center for the entire district and changing the attendance boundaries so that students in the area east of Halsted, north of Route 6, and southwesterly of the Grand Trunk Railroad would attend the Coolidge School. All students in the area north of Route 6 and west of State Street would attend Coolidge School. Students south of Route 6 and west of the C & EI Railroad would continue to attend Taft School. The board would continue to acquire a centrally located site for an upper grade center by proposing another referendum to authorize the use of the $235,000 unissued school building bonds; authorize the increase in the bond’s interest

rate; authorize such additional bonds as needed for construction; and authorize a $0.21 educational tax rate increase from $1.28 to $1.49. The first phase of construction would be ready for September, 1970 to accommodate all 7th grade students while the second phase would be completed, provided there was bonding power, “probably” in 1972. In the event the referendum failed, then the board’s alternate plan was the utilization of an existing school as an upper grade center for all 7th and 8th grade students in the district; relocate three portables to the upper grade center and purchase more as needed; and adjust the attendance areas as required. Board President Mr. Wiersma, moved to adopt a resolution authorizing their attorney to submit this plan to the court. Board secretary Mr. Graf moved to amend the open enrollment transfer policy which allowed Kennedy kindergarten through 2nd grade students to transfer to any other district school with a class size of less than thirty-three students. Dr. Watts objected to this method of amending an existing policy contrary to established board polices. Mr. Wiersma dismissed Dr. Watts’ objection commenting “it was better than going to jail.”

The board’s plan was rejected by Judge Hoffman because it did not satisfy the standards of the July 8 order or the requirements of the 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution and Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The school board was ordered to implement Plan C recognizing Coolidge School as the district’s upper grade center for seventh and eighth grade students throughout the district. The attendance areas for Roosevelt, Madison, Eisenhower, and Taft Schools would remain the same. Kennedy School in Phoenix would remain the same serving kindergarten through second grade.

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students. The order also directed the board to provide school bus transportation for
students living 1½ miles from the school to which they were assigned. Timely reports
were to be submitted to the court on July 31, August 20, and August 30, 1968, stating in
detail the steps which had been taken to comply with the order. The attorney for the
board, Roland Glink, told the court that the South Holland School District 151 Board of
Education believed it was not required to provide busing to overcome school
desegregation due to neighborhood segregation. Mr. Glink did say however, that the
board would comply while an appeal was pending. 62

The Shopper, a local South Holland paper, ran a paid advertisement from the
Neighborhood Schools Committee promoting the saving of neighborhood schools by
taking a stand against busing District 151 children. In an open letter to residents and
supporters of the board’s decision to appeal Judge Hoffman’s decision, the Neighborhood
Schools Committee stated:

We are well aware of the tension and chaos existing in the district which,
in our opinion, is due to the newly hired superintendent’s attempt to steer
and manipulate the district towards his own objectives plus the lawsuit
filed by the United States Justice Department charging this district with
segregation of faculty and staff and later amended to include pupils. Our
outward silence was purposeful. With the lawsuit filed against our school
district, the vote by the school board to deny and fight these charges, and
criticism of the board by its own superintendent, its ex-board president and
a few residents, our governing committee felt it best to avoid public
statements which could possibly get out of hand by debating the minority
opponents of the board…The Neighborhood Schools Committee has voted
to start and support a Fund Drive to aid District 151 defray the cost of
litigation…An Accounts Payable fund, “THE NEIGHBORHOOD

District 151 Newspaper Archive Collection, Vol. 1.
SCHOOLS-DISTRICT 151 DEFENSE FUND” has been set up with the South Holland Trust and Savings Bank.63

Resignation of Dr. Watts

On July 17, 1968, Dr. Charles B. Watts submitted his voluntary letter of resignation to the South Holland School District 151 Board of Education which was accepted at the July 22, 1968 board meeting (see Appendix H). His resignation was made effective August 16, 1968 with African American board member Mr. McGee and White board member Mr. Davis voting nay. In his letter to the board, he expressed his disagreement with the Neighborhood Schools Committee’s opposition to busing and maintaining segregated schools describing the group as “an irresponsible, highly negative, extremist, reactionary pressure group.” Dr. Watts also did not agree with the majority of the board which voted to appeal Judge Hoffman’s desegregation order noting that it would be more expensive to fight than to focus on providing a high quality educational program. He called for the resignation of five board members, who had asked him twice during the past ten weeks to resign for “public relations” purposes. He recommended that the two remaining board members appoint new board members who are better educated, seriously interested in improving local schools but with no “ax to grind” and less politically partisan. Dr. Watts referenced the unethical behaviors of five board members citing the informal gatherings of two to five members; working with a negative pressure group involved in deliberate misrepresentation of school issues, plans,

and character assassination; flagrant disregard for official board policies; and abuse of lengthy executive sessions to discuss educational plans that should have been held in open session. He admonished the majority of the board for their “stated commitment to and proven record of making decisions based on uncertain, capricious political considerations and pressures rather than on more basic principles and educational purposes.”

An editorial in the South Holland Tribune dated July 25, 1968 expressed support for the vision and guidance Dr. Watts tried to provide to the South Holland School District 151 Board of Education describing his resignation as the sacrificial lamb stating:

In the tradition of ancient Rome, the board of education of grade school district 151 threw its superintendent into the arena and the crowd cheered for the lions.

The editorial also discussed the continuous pressures applied by a group of citizens towards the board and highlighted Dr. Watts’ professionalism and noted lack of board support stating:

So, the sacrificial lamb became Dr. Watts, who had been assigned to attend and participate in a workshop on integration but who was forced to publicly defend his statements there without the support he reasonably could have expected from the board of education which gave him the assignment. It was Dr. Watts who scarcely mentioned integration at school board meetings but followed orders to prepare materials and inform the taxpayers…It was Dr. Watts who again completed an assignment when he presented three plans to add classroom space or restructure overcrowding…It was Dr. Watts who followed the recommendation of a team of educational experts that had studied the district and showed the

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board how, at reasonable cost, it could have started the district toward a minimum standard upper grade education...It was Dr. Watts who warned that federal action might be filed, who recommended that the case not be fought and who said that appeal would be unnecessary, fruitless, and expensive...But his advice and admonitions fell on deaf ears...For Dr. Watts there may be some personal relief, however, for over the past year he has been the target of ridicule, humiliation and rumor and the scapegoat for educational inadequacies he fought so hard to eliminate. His home has been defaced, his property vandalized and yet he suffered through all these indignities in the hope that enlightenment of the populace might someday miraculously occur.66

Neighborhood Schools Committee Supports SD 151

Despite the turmoil surrounding the resignation of Dr. Watts, the board of education continued their attempts to fight the court ordered desegregation with the support of the Neighborhood Schools Committee. On July 19, 1968 the Neighborhood Schools Committee hosted a meeting at the Thornton Township Hall in front of an audience of 450 residents from South Holland, Harvey, and Phoenix. The Neighborhood Schools Committee President, Frank Novak introduced members from the Mt. Greenwood, Bogan, and Southeast Civic Associations who were fighting Chicago Schools’ busing programs. Former School District 151 board members Lee Johnson and Thomas Mulhern voiced their support for neighborhood schools encouraging residents to contact every political representative from the district to support South Holland or they would be opposed openly and actively. State Representative Jack Walker addressed the audience supporting the committee’s right to fight the desegregation order through legal means and promised financial support on behalf of himself, Congressmen Derwinski and State Representative Thompson (see Figure 12). State Representative Walker also stated

66Ibid.
that he consistently voted against busing for the purpose of integration and against the
Armstrong Act. Mr. John Hebert of Phoenix, when asked how the people of his
community felt about busing replied “We’ve been paying for segregation all these years;
now we are willing to pay for integration.”67 South Holland resident David Gouwens,
expressed his opinion to the court order in a letter to the editor of the South Holland
Tribune on July 25, 1968 stating:

We as a nation are in crucial domestic straits. The alternatives for a
tomorrow seem clear: ugly strife or cultural healing. The attainment of the
latter requires not fear, but energy, imagination, and moral courage. In our
own very specific situation, the time has come to stop foolish court
appeals, and to begin some serious collective study of the Kerner report,
and some serious consideration of what our role is to be in the changing
social milieu. The challenge is set, but time is running out. The course of
the American future is being determined by our actions here and now.68

The South Holland Tribune printed a response to Mr. Gouwens’ letter received
from William Small on August 1, 1968 who stated:

David Gouwens has failed to see the whole picture (he’s in good company
with many of the politicians of the nation). In eight years the population
of South Holland has doubled. These people have moved out here from
neighborhoods in the city which have changed racially. The great majority
did not want to move from their old homes. They were forced to because
of violent actions in the streets, parks, and shopping areas…Is it any
wonder that these people do not want to see racial change in their new
homes? It is indeed ironical that the politicians in Washington who feel
the need of a social revolution send their children to private schools in
Virginia. The white man also has civil rights. And this right should

Dee McAdams, South Holland School District 151 Newspaper Archive Collection, Vol. I.

68 “Local Issues Part of Nation-Wide Tragedy,” Letter to Editor, South Holland Tribune, July 25,
permit him to live and school his children where they will be safe to live and see this social revolution.\textsuperscript{69}

\begin{figure}[h]
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\caption{“I’m for Neighborhood Schools”}
\end{figure}

South Holland resident, Alan W. Johnson, in a letter to the editor of the \textit{South Holland Tribune} pleaded to the community for the need to stop the fighting and the appeals stating:

We need no more fighting, no more appeals, no more wasted funds on legal fees. The court case was so decisive because our violation of federal and moral laws was so flagrant. All men of good will have a right and will have an opportunity to share the blessing of freedom. Can we begin with the children?\textsuperscript{70}

The \textit{South Holland Tribune} reported that Board Member Wallace Davis resigned from the School District 151 Board of Education on July 29, 1968 during a special

\textsuperscript{69}``People Moved to Avoid Violence,’’ Letter to Editor, \textit{South Holland Tribune}, August 1, 1968. South Holland School District 151 Newspaper Archive Collection, Vol. I.

meeting of the board. No reason was given for his resignation other than noting that Mr. Davis voted against appealing the case citing the expense of litigation and voted not to accept Dr. Watts’ resignation.71

Dr. Watts continued to perform the duties of his position as he completed the first court ordered Status Report due by July 31, 1968. The status report described the steps taken to comply with the court order following Plan C which identified Coolidge School as the upper grade center for all district students in grades 7 and 8. Coolidge students in grades 3 through 6 were reassigned to Madison, Taft, Eisenhower, and Roosevelt schools. The status report provided information related to the reassignment of teaching staff, informing parents of K-2 children at Kennedy school that students could transfer to any of the district’s other schools.72 The August 20, 1968 status report prepared by Dr. Watts included board actions related to employment, administrative appointments, implementation plans, faculty assignments, student transfers, bulletins to parents and bus transportation plans. Status reports would continue to be a requirement so long as the court order was in effect. The South Holland Tribune reported on August 4, 1968 that Dr. Watts submitted the Status Report along with a copy of his four page resignation letter to Judge Hoffman. The board’s attorney Marvin Glink indicated that Dr. Watts did

71.“Wally Davis Resigns from District 151 School Board, Third in Three Months to Quit,” South Holland Tribune, August 1, 1968. South Holland School District 151 Newspaper Archive Collection, Volume I.

not submit the report to him prior to submitting it to the court nor did he approve of the resignation letter being included.

During the August 5, 1968 board meeting, board member Don McGee moved for approval of the Title I funds proposed for the 1968-69 school year. Board member Charles Hendrix indicated earlier in the meeting that he was not in favor of accepting federal aid under the present circumstances and wanted this item deleted from the agenda to no avail. The Title I funds were approved with Mr. Hendrix voting nay. At the same meeting, bus transportation bids were opened and reviewed. Van Der Aa Bus Company was awarded the bid with the previously specified stipulation of reducing or cancelling services pending the outcome of the board’s current appeal of Judge Hoffman’s ruling. The board did not take action on a possible lunch program for the upper grade center because they wanted to receive feedback from the citizens of District 151 before they made any decisions. Dr. Watts was also asked to explain to the board why he did not forward the first Status Report to the board’s attorney prior to sending it to Judge Hoffman. Dr. Watts addressed the misunderstanding that took place regarding the Status Report as he prepared it based on the court order. He discussed the report with Mr. Glink, the board’s attorney as directed previously and then submitted the report to the court and to the attorney on the same day. Board member Mr. Hendrix made it clear that the board’s attorneys are to be the channels to the court. Dr. Watts was questioned by board member Mr. Graf regarding the planning for the October 15 report to the court concerning the required desegregation of the Kennedy School beginning with the 1969-70 school year. He reported that he made no plans since he felt it would be more
appropriate for the acting superintendent or new superintendent to work with the board to determine a suitable plan. Dr. Watts however, offered three recommendations: (1) convert Kennedy School into the special education school for the district; (2) convert Kennedy School into a model Primary School for the entire district or; (3) re-draw the attendance lines. 73

Better Education, Inc.

A new organization called Better Education, Inc. comprised of people interested in actively supporting better education and promoting harmony among all citizens of communities met at the Thornton Township Hall in South Holland, Illinois on August 14, 1968 (see Figure 13). In front of a crowd of approximately 450 people, State Representative Anthony Scariano stated that busing was not the issue in this school district stating:

You’ve always had busing here, as late as this year children were bused to Roosevelt where there was no safety factor involved. I’ve never seen headlines. I’ve never heard jeers and I’ve never received letters about busing until this court decision. 74

State Representative Scariano also commented on the reasons behind Judge Julius Hoffman’s ruling stating:

Judge Hoffman’s decision was based on testimony by past and present school board members and administrators who admitted that boundary lines had been changed with the shift in population…The judge also found evidence that school board candidates in 1964 ran on a segregation platform and that an upper grade center was rejected the same year

73 South Holland School District 151 Board of Education Meeting Minutes, August 5, 1968, pp. 1-5.

because of probable integration of the schools…Judge Hoffman said this was done with intent – it was deliberate. It was not something that just happened naturally and unassisted…It’s time we stopped clucking our tongues and pointing our fingers at Selma and Little Rock and recognize that the problem exists here in South Holland.75

Figure 13. Better Education, Inc.

Dr. Gerald Johnson, assistant to the president of the Illinois Synod, Lutheran Church of America expressed his thoughts on scripture stressing parental responsibility and brotherhood of man. He stated, “The Bible is significantly silent about race.”76

Abner Mikva, Democratic candidate for representative in the second congressional district, startled the audience with his comment, “The school does not belong to the parents who send their children there.” He went on further to explain his comments:

75Ibid.

76Ibid.
Everybody pays for the schools, including unmarried taxpayers, parents without children, parents whose children are grown and parents who enroll their children in parochial schools. The school is part of a whole society and should be treated as such.\textsuperscript{77}

The Better Education, Inc. committee requested that James McGovern, Acting Superintendent attend the August 14 meeting to explain Plan C and its effect upon the district. Mr. McGovern replied that he could not attend because a board member advised him against outlining detailed plans because they had not been finalized by the board. The Better Education, Inc. committee Vice President Mr. Melvin Dunn of South Holland commented on the board’s lack of effort to calm the community by clarifying its position with respect to future plans and the effect of Plan C upon the school community.\textsuperscript{78}

The \textit{South Holland Tribune}, Letters to the Editor of August 22, 1968 published a letter from D. N. Quamme from South Holland in response to the Better Education, Inc. meeting stated:

The clergy quite eloquently equated love of neighbor with the busing of children to school… Mr. Anthony Scariano applauded the District 151 Court Order on the grounds that as children had been illegally transported between schools in the 40’s and 50’s, the government (politicians) were now duty bound to legalize the whole procedure by determining for us who shall be bused and where…Somehow the initial dreary meeting of the Better Education group fell far short of its purpose of explaining and justifying Judge Hoffman’s dictatorial decision. I for one can see little or no relationship between Bibles and buses…Nor can I understand the argument that busing with federal blessing is any more legal that it was

\textsuperscript{77}Ibid.

without. Somehow Mr. Scariano has managed to convince himself, if not others, that two wrongs do indeed make a right. 79

Another writer, R.V. of South Holland who commented on the Better Education, Inc. meeting stating:

We hear arguments from educators, long on book-learning but seemingly lacking in common sense that they know what is best; anyone who disagrees is ignorant and not entitled to hold his bigoted and prejudiced opinion. The people are suddenly blessed with the presence of persons such as State Rep. Anthony Scariano, Abner Mikva, and other outside agitators who assure us, according to the TRIBUNE of August 18, that “Busing Not Issue in District 151.” What these people are doing is seeking a moralistic solution to pragmatic problems… 80

Dr. Watts and James McGovern, Acting Superintendent worked together to prepare the opening of schools for the 1968-1969 school year. Assisted by the staff they moved classroom furniture, textbooks, library books and instructional materials; planned staff, bus routes, student pick-up points, transferred student records, and notified parents of the bus schedule, each school’s open house, and the school calendar prior to the opening of school. 81 While Dr. Watts’ last day as superintendent was scheduled for Friday, August 16, 1968, he continued to encourage the residents of the school community to support the opening of their schools on September 4, 1968 under Judge Hoffman’s court order and not delay until the appeals court decided the case. The Neighborhood Schools Committee continued to rally support from Ray Page,


81 Van Dam, *Who’s First on the Bus*, p. 83.
Superintendent of Public Instruction, state representatives, congressmen, business leaders, and local clergy to fight to maintain neighborhood schools. The Better Education, Inc. group also supported by local legislators, clergy, and educators, continued to hold rallies to support Judge Hoffman’s ruling by promoting harmony and better education for all. Mrs. Buckner reflected on the leadership of Dr. Watts stating she wished the district had kept him because of his forward thinking. She had a great deal of respect for Dr. Watts for trying to obey the desegregation order despite the feelings of board members, parents and community. He was going to provide a curriculum that would grow and develop with the students while maximizing the revenues available to enhance the learning environment for all students. Instead he was handed a “hot potato” because he was the one who had to implement the desegregation order (Buckner interview, pp. 44-46). Faced with the challenge of selecting a school leader with the ability to bring the school community together, the South Holland School District 151 Board of Education voted to approve the hiring of Dr. Thomas Van Dam to serve as their new superintendent at their August 19, 1968 board meeting (see Figure 14). Former board member, Mr. Hannes Lee Johnson was appointed to replace Wallace Davis on the school board. Dr. Thomas Van Dam, believing a good school program would solve many of the problems in the district, accepted the challenging position of superintendent. The court ordered desegregation was scheduled for September 18, 1968.  

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Figure 14. Superintendent Dr. Thomas E. Van Dam

Dr. Thomas Van Dam 1968-1987

Dr. Van Dam held a press conference at his office to share his background in education and insight regarding the state of South Holland School District 151. Dr. Van Dam came to District 151 with over twenty years combined experienced in school administration and teaching. He worked at some of Chicago’s most challenging high schools such as Morgan Park High School on the west side, Englewood High School on the south side, and Carver High School in Altgeld Gardens. Dr. Van Dam served in the United States Navy prior to teaching chemistry and physics. He earned his undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of Chicago and his doctorate from the University of Illinois. Dr. Van Dam discussed in his interview the necessity of
opening school without delay assuring the public of his commitment to follow Judge Hoffman’s desegregation order. Dr. Van Dam did not believe that the people of South Holland resented integration however, when forced by the federal government; it could create a hostile situation.83

**Hear Us O Lord**

On Friday, August 23, 1968 the Neighborhood Schools Committee held a rally at the Thornton Township Hall in South Holland (see Figure 15). A reported 500 to 600 people were present for the purpose of rallying financial support on behalf of the board of education in their stand against the court’s decision to desegregate School District 151 schools. A panel of speakers consisting of Bob Stelzner, executive editor of Calumet Publishing; Al Stephaker, representing State Senator Arthur Gottschalk; State Representative John Thompson; Rev. Paul Eldrige, Conservative Baptist Church; Lee Johnson, speaker for the Neighborhood Schools Committee; Rev. Richard Rice, First Baptist Church of South Holland; Rev. Ronald Brown, Calvary Reformed Church of South Holland; N. E. Hutson, legal advisor to Ray Page, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction; and Fourth District Congressman Edward Derwinski were present at the meeting. The meeting was recorded by Public Broadcasting Laboratory (PBL) and segments were included in the documentary *Hear Us O Lord.*

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Reverend Ronald Brown addressed the crowd citing his reasons for his objection to the court order and is described in the South Holland Tribune as being the frankest in his opinion of mixing races in schools stating:

Children pick up the worst from others, the worst habits and language. Being sinners, children do not have a positive moral influence on others. By agreeing to the social planners’ schemes, you are inviting your children to pick up the worst…If there are differences [in intelligence and native ability between the races] it is a disservice to all children to bring them together. Until we find better answers, we had better stick to the neighborhood schools.  

Figure 15. Neighborhood Schools Committee Meeting, August 23, 1968

Reverend Brown also appears in the *Hear Us O Lord* video documentary recorded at the same meeting providing a metaphor for the separation of races stating:

It is God who in his providence has created neighborhoods and he has created them for a purpose. Now that is not an air tight division, but God has divided man to restrain the wickedness of the heart. Ever take an ice cube tray from the refrigerator and fill it with water and leave the divider out and try to carry that tray across the kitchen floor, you get halfway to the refrigerator and it slops all over the place. You put the divider in, fill it with water and can jiggle it all you want. The water doesn’t splash on the floor. Why? - because it has been divided.85

*Dolton Pointer* reporter, Mr. Jimmie Dee McAdams described the effect of Reverend Brown’s speech upon the audience stating “This young giant of a minister held his audience completely enthralled and received a standing ovation at the conclusion of his remarks.”86

Mr. N. E. Hutson, legal advisor to Mr. Ray Page from the office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, promised the crowd to ask the appellate court for permission to enter the case as a friend of the court. He told the crowd the federal court’s ruling to bus children in the district violated state law. Mr. Hutson stated the transportation of students was only ordered due to the children being a different color and referred to the law stating that a district must adjust boundary lines to prevent segregation; however, it does not say you should adjust boundary lines to promote integration. Mr. Hutson concluded his address by stating that the School Board of

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85*Hear Us O Lord!*, Public Broadcasting Laboratory, Westchester University IMC Film Collection, ICC #75135552. National Education Television, 1968.

District 151 could legally delay opening of schools indefinitely, if petitioned by the parents. 87

Congressman Edward Derwinski announced to the crowd that he favored the neighborhood school concept stating:

I believe the federal government is deliberately using District 151 as a test case…in my opinion, congress never intended that students be bused for the sole purpose of integration. I feel the board has every right to appeal…Be very careful not to accept unsolicited support from outside… If the judge’s decision is sustained, it’ll be applied all over and will raise havoc with the legitimate operation of schools on a local level. 88

A special board meeting was called on August 30, 1968 to answer questions raised by the community regarding the district’s plans for opening schools on September 4, 1968. The board received petitions containing 2,268 names requesting that the opening of school be postponed until after the Federal Court of Appeals hearing. The petitions were the result of the comments made by Mr. Hutson, legal representative from the office of Ray Page, Superintendent of Public Instruction at a Neighborhood Schools Committee rally held August 23, 1968. Board President Louis Wiersma explained to the audience why the board must open schools as scheduled stating:

The board is not in a position to delay the starting of school for two very good reasons: 1.) We anticipate the decision on our appeal will be made approximately by the middle of October. If the decision favored us, it would take another week or two to orient our school system-thus there would be a total delay in the start of school from six to eight weeks. The impact on our educational program would be disastrous. 2.) We have


discussed with our attorneys and in their opinions, the board could very well be held in contempt of court if we attempted to change the school calendar at this late date.\(^8^9\)

Dr. Van Dam described his first official meeting on August 30, 1968 in his memoir called *Who’s First On the Bus?* In it he states:

My first Board meeting was attended by hundreds of black and white adults and children sitting as much as possible on separate sides of the Eisenhower School gymnasium. Police were present to keep order. Throughout the meeting, various members of the audience shouted at the Board and threatened each other across the room…The audience was told that non-school people including parents and reporters were banned from the schools and school grounds for two weeks. The South Holland, Harvey, and Phoenix police departments, by board resolution and my request, were to investigate and take a hand in seeing that school would open orderly and in control.\(^9^0\)

**Opening Day Under Court Ordered Integration**

The opening day for South Holland School District 151 schools was without incident. Newspaper reporters, camera crews and parents were all waiting outside the schools in the district. There was no picketing or anyone blocking the buses. Dr. Van Dam and Board President Louis Wiersma were stationed at Coolidge School monitoring the intermingling of the students as they arrived and discussing bus routes (see Figure 16). At the north end of the Eisenhower School the first bus from Phoenix arrived with the school board attorneys exiting first followed by the students (see Figure 17). There were no reported incidents or noted hostilities between the students.\(^9^1\)


\(^9^0\) Van Dam, *Who’s First on the Bus*, p. 84.

\(^9^1\)Ibid., p. 85.
commended the people of South Holland and Phoenix for their fine behavior at the opening day of school. Mayor Gouwens expressed his belief that the news media may have been disappointed that they did not get the “big story” after bringing all the equipment and getting only a few pictures of students getting off buses. The Mayor praised all groups for their emphasis on lawful and legal resistance.\footnote{Mayor Gouwens Praises Citizens on School Opening. Dolton Pointer, September 12, 1968. South Holland School District 151 Newspaper Archive Collection, Vol. II.}

\textit{Figure 16}. First day of school under desegregation – Coolidge School
Figure 17. First day of school under desegregation – Eisenhower School

In a letter to the Editor of the South Holland Tribune, Phoenix parent Mrs. B. Brown attended a Neighborhood School meeting at Thornton Township Hall shared her experience as she listened to the questions asked equating education to integration. However, she commented that no one was listening to the response since they were lost in the appeal for donations to carry on the fight against busing. The letter writer states:

Here in Phoenix is a community that for 15 years has tried to make an inroad toward improvement – we don’t want to set the world on fire. We just want to make a spark, and help light up the world, but the other area, South Holland, has steadily tried to keep us in harness. Now the harness has broken from wear and tear.  

At the September 9, 1968 regular board meeting, the board of education rejected a request from the Better Education, Inc. group to submit their by-laws to the Appellate Court as a “viewpoint of the community.” Board member Mr. Hendrix recommended

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that nothing from the Better Education, Inc. be sent to the courts unless it was accompanied by at least 1,500 signatures. Board secretary Mr. Graf felt it would not be proper to send this information to the courts while African American board member Mr. McGee disagreed commenting that anything representing the opinion of the board had been sent to the court, but the board was reluctant to air the views of people who disagreed with them. Mr. Donald McGee submitted his letter of resignation stating he did not care to serve on the board until such time that the board decided to concern itself with the education of all students in the district.94

On Monday, September 16, 1968 the Neighborhood Schools Committee organized a torchlight night prayer service to protest the Federal Court integration order. Approximately four hundred people attended the meeting with the intent to demonstrate that the peaceful opening of District 151 schools did not mean that forced busing was acceptable to the South Holland community. The local ministers of the area, including Reverend Ronald Brown, conducted the prayer meeting to demonstrate their faith in the cause for justice to return to neighborhood schools.95 Dr. Van Dam responded to a Chicago American newspaper article by Leonard Aronson, “New Superintendent to Push Integration, Faces Fight in the Suburbs,” which came out the same day as the Neighborhood Schools Committee prayer meeting. The South Holland Tribune printed Dr. Van Dam’s reply whereby he admonished Mr. Aronson for taking his statements out

94South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, September 8, 1968, p. 2.

of context and inciting further feelings of discontent within the South Holland community stating:

By interpreting my role as superintendent to work for orderly schools and a strong school program as my intent or wish to further push integrating the South Holland community, or that by producing a strong school program and orderly schools, this involves fighting the South Holland Community because they do not wish the schools to succeed, Mr. Aronson, in his article, is grossly in error in reference to my views and has wronged the South Holland community…The board chose me to administer the community schools through this crisis because of [my]administrative experience, with instructions to make the schools of the district function to the best of the teachers’ and administrators’ ability. 96

Dr. Van Dam stated the work of news reporters would be greatly enhanced if:

…the news media would stop trying to make news by seeking to incite the various factions of the community through distortion of facts, taking statements out of context and by inserting their own conclusions in the text and headlines of news articles. 97

Welcome to Occupied District 151

On September 17, 1968 the Chicago Sun-Times reported the loss of 317 White students due to the court ordered integration resulting in transfers out of the district to private schools. Dr. Van Dam included these statistics in his regular report to Judge Hoffman indicating the loss in enrollment which resulted in the district losing $77,000 in state aid. 98  Mr. Robert Zeilenga was appointed to the board to replace Mr. Donald


97 Ibid.

McGee on October 7, 1968. The residents carried signs protesting the acceptance of federal Title funds and wanted the board to reject them (see Figure 18). Mr. Corbett, a resident of the Madison School district urged the board to not “do anything with this [Title I funds] because we are without representation in our district since we are under a federal court order.” Mr. Mulhern, a resident of the Eisenhower School area, proposed to the board “not to accept the money from the federal government because it would just bring in more federal people to the district.”99 Dr. Van Dam urged the board to consider the acceptance of the Title I grant explaining the dollars represented the income tax money that the people of South Holland had paid to the government. Dr. Van Dam further explained that the Title I money would provide a full time librarian for the upper grade center, a guidance counselor, and a reading diagnostician. He informed the board that there was a two week deadline before a decision must be made and recommended that all the title programs be considered at the same time. Board member Mr. Hendrix recommended that the board wait until the full board was present to discuss the concerns expressed. Board member Mr. Johnson commented on the inconsistency of fighting a federal court order and then turning around and accepting federal money. He stated he could not go along with any approval related to Title money. Board President Louis Wiersma commented on how hard he had fought the desegregation order; however, he was not willing to “throw the whole thing down the drain” and commented on several former supportive school board members who now seemed intent on derailing the

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district’s educational system. The vote to approve the Title I proposal was tabled until the next regular board meeting scheduled for October 21, 1968.\footnote{Dist. 151 Board Delays Action on Title I, Dolton Pointer, October 10, 1968. South Holland School District 151 Newspaper Archive Collection, Vol. II.}

Figure 18. “Welcome to Occupied District 151”

U.S. Court of Appeals

On October 10, 1968 the school district’s attorney Mr. Ronald Glink and the Justice Department’s attorney Mr. Nathan Lewin presented an hour-long argument before the U.S. Court of Appeals regarding Judge Julius Hoffman’s desegregation orders of July 8 and July 22, 1968. The district’s attorney Mr. Glink argued the following points:

1. The segregation of the schools was due to residential patterns and not discriminatory decisions of the board, which produced predominantly Black and White schools.

2. The Harvey and Harvey Highlands’ students could not be bused into Coolidge because Coolidge was overcrowded.
3. The building of Taft and Kennedy schools and the failure to build an integrated upper grade center should be considered in light of the constitutionality of what occurred.

4. The Phoenix community’s failure to support the upper grade center referendum was taken into consideration by the board.

5. The District Court rejected the Taft Upper Grade Center Plan forcing Eisenhower and Madison schools to be included in the Order despite the fact that they were never involved in racial discrimination.

6. The District Court violated the spirit and language of the 1964 Civil Rights Act by ordering the implementation of Plan C to achieve racial balance by busing.

7. A plenary hearing was requested in view of no examination of Plan C on its merits and the limited amount of time granted the defendants to prepare its case.

8. The complete interest and policy of the State of Illinois had been completely disregarded as no pattern of discrimination was previously found and the court acted in unprecedented haste.

9. The District Court dismissed the entire State of Illinois’ government process, being the sole vote in deciding the remedies to be employed.\textsuperscript{101}

The Superintendent of Public Instruction, Ray Page also filed an amicus curiae brief in the U.S. Court of Appeals on behalf of South Holland School District 151. It leveled criticisms at Judge Hoffman’s decision stating:

The OSPI responds quickly to complaints transmitted through proper channels, the U.S. Justice Department never gave notice of its proceedings against 151. During the November 22, 1966 hearing with representatives of Congressman Derwinski and Ray Page present, the HEW officials reported they saw no pattern of discrimination against students and teachers in 151 and were to report this to the Justice department. If OSPI had been given notice of the proceedings, the hearing before Judge Hoffman and the appeal could have been avoided. The Armstrong Act in force in Illinois would solve the problem…The 151 plan set aside by the

\textsuperscript{101} Van Dam, \textit{Who’s First on the Bus}, p. 90.
Court was based on the interpretation of the majority of Civil Rights cases and the direction taken by Illinois.\textsuperscript{102}

In response the Justice Department’s lawyer, Mr. Lewin argued the following points:

1. The district followed a practice to hire Black teachers for the schools in Phoenix and White teachers for the other four schools.

2. The transfer request contract used by the district required the race of the teacher to be noted. The former superintendent (Kingsland) and board president (Graf) stated their belief that Black teachers should teach in Black schools because they have better rapport with the students.

3. School boundaries demonstrated fixed racial patterns based on evidence that White students bused to Roosevelt School lived closer to Coolidge School.

4. Board decisions made on school construction were determined to a great extent based on the racial attitudes expressed by the Black and White communities at board meetings and evident in the defeat of proposed building referenda to solve the upper grade center and school segregation problem.

5. The failure of the board to adopt Plan C as a program change to improve instruction and to reject it because it would have desegregated the district, clearly illustrates a deliberate act that deprived not only Black, but all students of a better education.

6. This is not an act to correct or adjust racial imbalance – nor was it a suit to compel a school district to overcome the consequences of segregated housing patterns. It was to end board policy and administrative decisions that had racially segregated staff and students.

7. The board was guilty of adopting policy to be dictated by the White community’s wish to maintain racially segregated schools. This was not residential pattern, but using segregated housing to deliberately design

\textsuperscript{102}Ibid., p. 88.
attendance rules and boundaries, transportation, expansion plans, and reorganization proposals to segregate students and teachers.\textsuperscript{103}

The U.S. Court of Appeals decided to take School District 151’s appeal of their court ordered desegregation under advisement. Meanwhile, Dr. Van Dam continued to work towards securing a delay for the Kennedy School proposed plan of desegregation as required by Judge Hoffman to be submitted by October 30, 1968.

At the October 21, 1968 board meeting, Board Member Mr. Graf stated that the board should be able to express an opinion and leave the Kennedy School as a K-2 building based on the professional opinion of Dr. Van Dam. The board decided to help Dr. Van Dam re-word the proposal regarding the Kennedy School and include a request that Judge Hoffman consider a postponement of the case until the Court of Appeals had reached a decision. The board’s attorney Mr. Van Der Aa also notified the board of a suit filed by citizens of South Holland under Section 22-19 of the Illinois School Code regarding the busing of children for the sake of integration. This was later found to be unsubstantiated.\textsuperscript{104} Mr. Vander Aa represented the board at this hearing scheduled for December 12, 1968.

Mr. Robert Hanrahan, Cook County Superintendent of Schools sent a report to the district regarding the ratings of each building noting Eisenhower, Madison, Roosevelt, and Kennedy Schools as average, while Coolidge School was rated below average.\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., p. 90.

\textsuperscript{104}“Discrimination Charge is Dismissed by Page,” \textit{South Holland Tribune}, June 22, 1969. South Holland School District 151 Newspaper Archive Collection, Volume III.

\textsuperscript{105}South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, October 21, 1968, pp. 1-3.
Dr. Van Dam clarified that the below average rating the state gave Coolidge School was related to the function of the school as an upper grade center and not safety reasons. He also reiterated the need for funds in order to bring the district out of debt and asked the board to reconsider the federal Title funds offered as the deadline for submission of the application was in ten days. The majority of the board members were still reluctant to give the approval to apply for the Title funds. Dr. Van Dam pointed out that the programs could be rejected at any point and made it clear to the board that they would have to leave it to their consciences if they did not approve the funds and the district’s appeal was rejected. The board moved to approve the application for Title funds with Mr. Hendrix and Mr. Johnson voting nay.106

During the November 4, 1968 meeting, Board Member Mr. Johnson made a motion that the Superintendent prepare a plan for the school system to revert back to its original state of K-8 schools pending the outcome of the Court of Appeals. All seven board members voted in support of this motion. Dr. Van Dam requested that the board consider proposing a $0.21 tax increase to help meet the district’s great financial need to the taxpayers of South Holland. The board agreed to hold a special election on December 14, 1968 and recommended that an opinion poll be conducted asking the taxpayers if they approved the acceptance of federal dollars to supplement the district’s programs.107

The Kennedy proposal submitted by Dr. Van Dam on behalf of the board was rejected by the federal attorneys on December 3, 1968. It did not comply with the 14th

107South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, November 4, 1968, p. 3.
Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 nor did the plan eliminate racial discrimination. The children of the Kennedy school were to be assigned to the other four K-6 schools with the creation of a special education center at Kennedy as well as a consolidation of bus routes. The board requested assistance from Ray Page, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, to prepare for the December 19, 1968 trial in Judge Hoffman’s court. Mr. N. E. Lewin from the Equal Educational Opportunity, Federal Office of Education, reminded the district that the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) had staff available to assist with preparing and implementing desegregation plans. Mr. Theron Johnson from the HEW arranged for a federal team to visit the district on December 16, 1968 to study and evaluate the district. The board’s attorneys, Ronald and Marvin Glink, requested a sixty day postponement so that the HEW committee would be able to conduct a study on a priority basis and make recommendations to the board that could aid all of the parties reducing the litigation expenses. Assistant U.S. Attorney Jack Schmetterer told the court they were glad the district accepted their assistance; however, it had always been available to them and had nothing to do with the merits to be tried on December 19 which was to determine whether the temporary injunction should become permanent. Judge Hoffman expressed concern over the district’s continued need to study their financial and educational problems stating:

I didn’t start this case. I tried to apply the laws and evidence. I treated it as an emergency matter, and it is still an emergency-more especially since

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I believe the Supreme court (sic) has consistently held certain things should be done in respect to integration. Therefore, I deny the motion…When and after the evidence is finished, other than that which might exist in regards to the Kennedy school, I’ll consider postponing the hearing, and not judge Kennedy until such a time as I might be able to study the proposal of the department.  

Dr. Van Dam and the board met with Vernon Crackle, Deputy Superintendent from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), and attorney N.E. Hudson from the OSPI to determine what would happen if the school district were to go bankrupt. The board was seeking guidance on whether they should go directly to the Supreme Court with the help of Ray Page’s office by requesting that the attorney general of the state assist them in an appeal to the Supreme Court.

The December 14, 1968 tax referendum was defeated by 514 yeas to 542 nays while the community, according to the opinion poll results, supported the use of federal funds by voting 643 yeas to 410 nays. The Neighborhood School Committee chairman Frank Novak wrote a letter to President Elect Richard Nixon requesting that he review the action taken by the federal courts against the school district stating:

It is true the racial separation does exist…not by design of the school system but by changing housing patterns…Despite this change, the school systems were kept intact without fanfare or incident. This district continued to maintain a well-administered educational system, a fair and equal return for all of its taxpayers…If Judge Hoffman’s edict remains unchallenged…it means…an enforced busing program intended to create

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110 Van Dam, *Who’s First on the Bus*, pp. 95-96.
artificial integration and racial balance. This is contrary to the laws of the State of Illinois and Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1954.\textsuperscript{111}

On December 17, 1968 the Appellate Court denied School District 151’s appeal against the District Court’s Order in a 2-1 decision. However, the Appellate Court granted a 30 day stay to School District 151 in order to study the opinion and carry out its suggestions about the trial for permanent injunction. The majority opinion by Appellate Court Judges Roger Kiley and Luther M. Swygert stated:

It follows that we approve the court’s conclusion that the conduct of the board in assigning teachers on the basis of race, drawing attendance zones, busing students, and in selecting school sites to preserve segregation was unconstitutional. State action enforcing the segregation of Negro and White pupils, solely on the basis of their being Negro, therefore violates the 14th Amendment.\textsuperscript{112}

Appellate Court Judge F. Ryan Duffy provided the dissenting opinion based on the majority ruling being contrary to the court’s previous decision written in \textit{Bell vs. City of Gary, 1963} which stated that a school district did not have to do anything if segregation was the result of residential changes only. Judge Duffy stated:

In my view the district court’s order requiring defendant to adopt Plan C and to bus approximately 790 Negro and White children to achieve ‘a certain racial makeup’ in each school, ignores not only our decision in Gary but also ignores the congressional attempt in passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964…The order of the district court also seems to have ignored the desperate financial condition of District 151…I cannot agree with the constitutional theory…that a constitutional violation depends not upon the effect of the actions of the school board but upon its psychological motivation. The district Court gave the school board seven days to come


\textsuperscript{112}“Trial Stay Granted in District 151 Case,” \textit{Dolton Pointer}, December 19, 1968. South Holland School District 151 Newspaper Archive Collection, Volume III.
forward with an adequate desegregation program proposal on its own. The government argued that this was more than ample time. Such argument is ridiculous. Possibly the board might have been able to assemble for a meeting within that time.\textsuperscript{113}

The hearing rescheduled for January 20, 1969 provided the South Holland School District 151 attorneys time to present additional evidence to support their case against desegregation. The district also did not support the busing court order which included Eisenhower and Madison schools since they were never directly involved in \textit{de jure} segregation acts unlike Roosevelt School where Black student transfers were refused. The board decided at their January 6, 1969 board meeting not to make an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court at that time and agreed to seek another attempt at a tax increase by scheduling a March 15, 1969 tax referendum.\textsuperscript{114}

The Neighborhood Schools Committee (NSC) leaders held a pep rally to support the District 151 School Board’s fight against the court order at the Thornton Township Hall on Friday, January 17, 1969. Leaders of the committee reviewed with the 100 residents present, information contained in Ray Page’s report. It cited the poor financial condition of the district due to busing; the lower than expected enrollment, high teacher turnover, high rate of teachers with provisional certificates, and that Coolidge School was not an adequate upper grade center.\textsuperscript{115} The NSC announced their continued drive to raise money to help School District 151 with litigation costs. A huge thermometer was located

\textsuperscript{113}“Trial Stay Granted in District 151 Case,” \textit{Dolton Pointer}, December 19, 1968. South Holland School District 151 Newspaper Archive Collection, Volume III.

\textsuperscript{114} South Holland School District 151 Board of Education Meeting Minutes, January 6, 1969.

on 162nd Street where residents and members of the business community could monitor the collection of funds to fight against the federal government’s control of their schools as they reach the $10,000 goal (see Figure 19). Mrs. Buckner recalled the animosity that existed between the factions of people; those in support of fighting the court order and those who wanted the school district to use school funds to educate the children. She stated it was difficult to pass the huge thermometer knowing that people contributed money in hopes of stopping the desegregation order. For the people of Phoenix, the desegregation order represented their struggle for equitable education for their children and was astonished to see that the people of South Holland thought it would only take $10,000 to stop the court order (Buckner interview, p. 12).

Figure 19. Neighborhood Schools Committee Thermometer

Permanent Injunction Hearings Begin

The January 20, 1969 hearing on the permanent injunction began with testimony from Dr. Van Dam regarding the board’s November 4, 1968 directive to him to eliminate the upper grade center at Coolidge School if the U.S. Court of Appeals had reversed the injunction. He discussed details of the plan which included returning 356 Black students in 3rd through 6th grades to Coolidge from the four previously all White schools and returning 296 White 7th and 8th grade students to their former schools. Dr. Van Dam also explained that there would be a two day suspension of school while the students’ records were returned to their former schools. U.S. Attorney J. Schmetterer argued that the plan proved the board’s intention to return to total segregation and supported the need for a permanent injunction. School board member Richard Graf was also called to testify regarding his letter to former Superintendent Dr. Charles Watts. Mr. Graf commented in his letter that the South Holland and Harvey communities would not support a tax referendum if the schools were integrated and that he saw no reason for integration. The hearing was continued through February 1969 before Judge Hoffman made his decision.117

Beginning in October, 1968 Dr. Van Dam shared his concerns with the Coolidge principal regarding the need to improve discipline, lunch time procedures, teacher supervision, schedules, and his relationship with the Kennedy principal. The Coolidge principal was asked to consider working with the Title programs for the district

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meanwhile he fell behind in teacher evaluations and was late with Title proposals and grant applications. There is no record of response from the Coolidge Principal regarding these shortcomings. Dr. Van Dam informed the board of his concerns regarding the leadership of the principal at Coolidge School on January 6, 1969 in executive sessions and felt it was in the best interest of the students to place another person in that position. This raised concern that moving a Black principal and replacing him with a White principal might lead to more community distress especially since the permanent injunction hearings were ongoing. Dr. Van Dam reminded the board that even though the referendum in December was defeated, the voters approved the acceptance of federal Title funds recognizing the concern and emphasis placed on school programs by the staff and board. He understood that he was hired to administer the schools and was not concerned about integration, segregation or disintegration of the school district as much as he was deeply concerned about the school program.  

On January 21, 1969 the Coolidge principal was subpoenaed into federal court to testify as a witness for the government regarding the quality of the junior high program at Coolidge School. The Coolidge principal testified that he had been warned by Dr. Van Dam that he could be nailed to the wall if the board found out and that the board’s attorney told him that if he chose to be interviewed he would have to “take the consequences.” On February 18, 1969, Dr. Van Dam removed the principal of Coolidge and assigned him as Coordinator of the Title programs without any loss in pay. The principal of the Madison School was appointed to Coolidge School. A parent group from

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118 Van Dam, Who’s First on the Bus, pp. 101-103.
Phoenix and the Harvey Highlands sent letters to the Cook County Superintendent of Schools, the Illinois State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the U.S. District Attorney, and Judge Hoffman asking for an investigation of the reasons for the reassignment. The U.S. District Attorney filed a petition with Judge Hoffman asking him to order Dr. Van Dam to reinstate the former principal at Coolidge School. Dr. Van Dam was contacted by the school board’s attorneys asking him to sign a letter they prepared apologizing and reinstating the former Coolidge principal to his position. He refused and prepared copies of all notes sent to the principal and board regarding his reasons for the transfer. Dr. Van Dam took the notes to Judge Hoffman’s chambers and asked his clerk to forward the notes stating if he was ordered to reinstate the principal he would release the information to the public. Dr. Van Dam explained in his letter to Judge Hoffman stating:

> For the sake of the children, whose interest we serve, let’s get on with making school work with the best education possible. The best interest of all will be served by allowing me to make educational administrative decisions of the district without the court responding to every change, as if it were intended to discriminate against a given group or individual. I made the change and it is a sound one, educationally and financially, for the children of the school district and the principal.\(^{119}\)

Dr. Van Dam was not held in contempt of court for his actions in presenting his “just cause” information directly to Judge Hoffman and bypassing the school board’s attorneys. The decision to transfer the Coolidge principal to Coordinator of Title

\(^{119}\) Ibid., pp. 102-104.
Programs was upheld by the board and a motion to release the administrator at the end of the 1968-1969 school year was approved.\footnote{South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, April 7, 1969, p. 2.}

A group of teachers at Coolidge School called off sick on February 7, 1969 to protest what they perceived to be a lack of support by the board and administration charging that school officials were trying to keep a court ordered integration plan from working. The teachers stated that Coolidge School was identified by state agencies as a poor upper grade center due to its inadequate facilities. The teacher spokesperson commented that Coolidge children could use the gym in the Kennedy School the previous school year and did not understand why they could not use it again for the current school year. They believed this was done to influence the current court hearing.\footnote{“Teachers Stage S. Holland Protest,” \textit{Chicago Daily News}, February 7, 1969. South Holland School District 151 Newspaper Archive Collection, Volume III.} During the February 17, 1969 board meeting, Dr. Van Dam referred to a letter he sent to the group of concerned teachers reminding them of their obligations and that it was necessary to follow proper procedures with grievances. The board also admonished the teaching staff of Coolidge School stating:

This School Board deplores the irresponsible action of a group of teachers at the Coolidge School last week (Friday, February 14, 1969). This unprofessional conduct was in direct violation of the Professional Negotiations Agreement with the DEA which was recently adopted by this Board at the request of the teachers.\footnote{South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, February 17, 1969, pp. 1-2.}

The hearing regarding the permanent injunction continued with state school official Mr. Warner Kuster from OSPI testifying that the upper grade center was
inadequately equipped to serve its students and considered poor from an educational point of view. However, when cross-examined, Mr. Kuster acknowledged that the state’s inspection of Coolidge School was hurried to accommodate South Holland School District 151 as well as his report was written quickly at the school’s request. Dr. Ben Hubbard, a school finance expert from the Illinois Teachers College at Normal testified regarding the borrowing capacity of the school district stating that the school district had a borrowing power of about $850,000 of which half would come from the issuance of tax anticipation warrants. The other half, according to Dr. Hubbard, would be in paying teacher salaries in scrip, exchangeable with merchants or finance companies, and did not limit the tax warrants. He also recognized that teachers would not renew their contracts with the district should this form of payment occur. Mr. Owen Wyandt, Thornton Township Treasurer, provided a poor financial outlook for the school district based on the district’s loss of state aid of approximately $60,000 due to the loss of 350 students since the court order began. Mr. Theron Johnson from the HEW testified that on December 26 and 27, 1968 a team from his office presented two alternative plans for desegregation to the School District 151 Board at the request of Dr. Van Dam. One plan maintained Coolidge School as the upper grade center for 7th and 8th grades and converted the Kennedy School into a kindergarten center for the entire district while the other four schools would serve 1st through 5th grades. The second plan combined Coolidge School

and Kennedy School to form the upper grade center for 6th, 7th, and 8th grade and the other four schools would serve students in kindergarten through 5th grade.\footnote{124}{“Claims ‘151’ Borrowing Power Is Still Good,” 

On February 3, 1969 U.S. Attorney Jack Schmetterer was granted a court order to inspect the site after being denied by the school board’s attorneys. He sought to rebut the statements made by school officials. Three FBI agents and Justice Department Attorney J. Harold Flannery were scheduled to photograph the facilities including the gymnasium, showers, science rooms, libraries, and specialty rooms at the Coolidge, Kennedy, and Taft Schools for comparison.\footnote{125}{“Court May Visit Dist. 151 Schools,” \textit{Dolton Pointer}, February 6, 1969. South Holland School District 151 Newspaper Archive Collection, Volume III.}

During the February 7, 1969 hearing, Board Member Mr. Hannes Lee Johnson testified that he was a member of the Neighborhood Schools Committee and sent his own eighth grade child to a private school in another town because he sought a self-contained smaller classroom for his son. Board President Mr. Louis Wiersma testified that the board adopted former Superintendent Dr. Watts’ recommendations for the Coolidge upper grade center including a lesser appropriation for textbooks, library books, physical education program, and eliminating the positions of curriculum director and assistant superintendent. Superintendent Dr. Van Dam testified about the notice he received October 11, 1968 from the Cook County Superintendent of Instruction stating that Coolidge School was rated as below average. The government, however, produced a
notice from the same office dated December 2, 1968 that rated Coolidge as average. Dr. Van Dam testified that he had not seen this document.126

The hearings concluded after another four weeks. Judge Hoffman ordered the attorneys for both sides to present their findings of fact, conclusions of law, and any decrees to him by March 3, 1969. Mr. Marvin Glink, attorney for the board, asked the court in his final argument to consider new evidence which would put District 151 under the Gary Schools decision which held that neighborhood racial imbalance was not enough reason for a court desegregation order. Judge Hoffman made it clear that he was not going to “whimsically” change his mind but would consider all evidence. Justice Department Attorney, Mr. J. Harold Flannery cited the Court of Appeals statement regarding the South Holland case that the board’s thinking they had reached a political accommodation with voters did not absolve them from obeying the law stating:

Eighty children were bused to White schools when they lived closer to Coolidge until this year; that has not yet been explained. Mr. Glink concedes that maybe financial problems will not catch up with District 151 until 1971, so let’s get on with desegregation and they can come on for relief when it happens. The time to begin school desegregation from kindergarten to eighth grade is now and in no event later than next September.127

**Struggle to Pass Tax Referendum Continues**

While the South Holland community awaited Judge Hoffman’s decision, the school district continued to face the challenges presented by the Neighborhood Schools

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Committee and the inability to pass a tax referendum. At the regular March 10, 1969 board meeting, Board President Mr. Louis Wiersma commented on the Chicago Daily News article that featured a picture of him with Mrs. Juanita Bailey of Phoenix the caption described as a “white vs. black” issue (see Figure 20). Mr. Wiersma thought it was unfair of the newspaper to portray the majority of South Holland residents as racists when they believed that American citizens had the right to select the neighborhood they wished to live in and send their children to school there. Mr. Wiersma also addressed the request by the NSC asking the school district to allow them use of the school’s equipment to print literature encouraging parents to vote no on the referendum and send it home with the students. The NSC stated that Mr. Ray Page, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, assured them that if literature was sent home in support of the referendum, then they had the same right to send home literature against the referendum.

Board President Wiersma stated:

> When I was elected I took an oath of office to do everything for the children, not against them. I wouldn’t vote for approval of this request. If they want to send me to jail for voting this way, let them.  

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130“151 Board President is Angered by District Agitators,” South Holland Tribune, March 13, 1969. South Holland School District 151 Newspaper Archive Collection, Volume III.
Superintendent Dr. Van Dam supported Mr. Wiersma by informing the public that since the hearing the district had not, to his knowledge, sent any literature home asking anyone to vote yes in favor of the referendum. The board president also refuted a NSC statement that educational fund money would be used for bus transportation. Mr. Wiersma informed the public that he had received confirmation from their attorneys that the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare had money available for busing when integration is required under government order. The board also showed support for Dr. Van Dam’s decision regarding the Coolidge School principal’s change in job assignment while they admonished the person who contacted the various state and federal officials...
affirming this was strictly an administrative decision and that is where it should have stayed.131

The push to pass the March 15, 1969 tax referendum was well under way with Dr. Van Dam speaking to various community groups and writing to the local newspapers urging voters to pass the tax hike. A bicycle parade by South Holland School District 151 students was planned urging voters to pass the referendum (see Figure 21). The NSC continued to insist that voters should vote No until such time when local control was returned to School District 151.132 Yet again, the referendum failed to pass by 930 Yeas to 1685 Nays.

Figure 21. School children from SD 151 help with referendum

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131 Ibid.

132 South Holland Tribune, Letters to Editor, March 13, 1969. South Holland School District 151 Newspaper Archive Collection, Volume III.
The April 12, 1969 school board election resulted in the re-election of Mr. Robert Zeilenga and the election of African American Phoenix resident, Mr. Pershing Broome for 3 year terms. Mr. Roy Meeder was elected for a one year term.\textsuperscript{133} The Neighborhood Schools Committee slate of candidates, incumbents Mr. Hannes Lee Johnson and Mr. Bart Krillic as well as Mr. Paul Eldridge were defeated.\textsuperscript{134}

On Tuesday evening, May 13, 1969, as the community of South Holland waited for Judge Hoffman’s decision regarding the permanent injunction, vandals stole two pieces of earth-moving equipment from the nearby Calumet Farm Supply Company. A John Deere tractor and a high lift were rammed against the back of the Kennedy School, lifting and pushing in the back wall (see Figure 22). The board later offered a $200 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person or persons responsible for the damage. No one was ever charged.\textsuperscript{135}

**Permanent Injunction Against District 151**

On May 15, 1969 Judge Julius Hoffman entered a permanent injunction requiring School District 151 to follow Plan I, submitted by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare for the integration of the district. The plan called for the upper grade center to include 6\textsuperscript{th} grade as well as 7\textsuperscript{th} and 8\textsuperscript{th} grades and be housed in both the Kennedy and Coolidge Schools. All district students through 5\textsuperscript{th} grade, including the kindergarten

\textsuperscript{133}South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, April 16, 1969, pp. 1-2.


\textsuperscript{135}“Vandals Damage School,” *South Holland Tribune*, May 18, 1969. South Holland School District 151 Newspaper Archive Collection, Volume III.
through 2nd grade students currently at Kennedy school, were to attend the four other schools in the district. The board would be required to file a report with the court outlining their detailed plans and twenty days after school opened they were required to submit a racial breakdown and actual enrollment by school each year. Any new building plans would now require approval by the court as well as filing with the U.S. Attorney’s office. Judge Hoffman, in addressing the defendants in his Memorandum of Decision, expressed his difficulty in understanding the opposition to desegregation stating:

Figure 22. Vandals damage Kennedy School

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For an American who is devoted to his country and wants to believe in the intelligence and good-will of its citizens, it is very painful to contemplate and difficult to understand continued resistance to school desegregation… The separation of black and white children is in itself an inhibiting factor. In any community where one school is black and one predominantly white nobody needs to be told which is considered the good school. This is the case whether segregation is the result of an old housing pattern, the flight of white residents or the construction of a new school on a site beyond the walking distance of Negro children…The academic record of white children attending integrated schools has paralleled that of comparable white students in all-white schools…segregation harms the white as well as the black student. Just as racial isolation tends to cripple a black child by inducing a feeling of inferiority; it inflates the white child with a false belief of his superiority.\textsuperscript{137}

Judge Hoffman also included the specific practices of the board which contributed to the segregation of students and staff stating:

The lack of white teachers in black schools and black teachers in white schools cannot be inadvertent or attributable to their place of residence, as in the case of children. When transfer privileges are applied unequally, when attendance areas are not clearly defined and boundary lines are shifted in such a manner as to keep the races apart, segregation cannot successfully be passed off as the incidental result of a neighborhood school policy…For many years, millions of children in rural districts and pupils with severe handicaps have withstood the “hardship” of long bus rides. Clearly, the important consideration from every point of view is not the trip in the yellow bus, but the quality and composition of the school at the end of it. Busing costs money, to be sure, but the hidden costs of discrimination run much higher…Desegregation is a very small down payment on an investment whose dividends are good citizenship, justice and the welfare of the nation. The time is long past when school boards can be permitted to shirk their full responsibility and fail to eliminate discriminatory practices without the necessity of a court order.\textsuperscript{138}

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\textsuperscript{137} United States of America vs. School District 151 of Cook County, Illinois, United States Court of Appeals for the 7\textsuperscript{th} Circuit, No. 17754, Civil Action No. 68C755, Appendix Volume I, Memorandum of Decision, pp. 87-94.
\textsuperscript{138}Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
Judge Hoffman also addressed the Kennedy School desegregation proposal submitted by the school district on October 30, 1968 by sustaining the United States District Court’s original objections to the plan. He ordered the district to take affirmative action to disestablish school segregation and eliminate the effects of prior unlawful conduct in the operation of the school system.

At the May 19, 1969 regular board meeting, Board Attorney John Van Der Aa recommended that the board take the case to the U.S. Court of Appeals and request that the injunction be lifted while the court was deliberating the case. Board President Louis Wiersma did not believe that the Justice Department took the board’s seeking of a reasonable solution to their integration problems seriously and would favor taking the case all the way to the Supreme Court. However, Mr. Wiersma commented that he would seek input from the community on continuing the case since the district’s funds could not absorb the cost of a Supreme Court case. Board member Roy Meeder commented on the district’s spending of $50,000 in legal fees and wanted the board to consider an immediate school tax referendum so that the district could support both the litigation and the schools. Board Member James Hendrix commented that the district should continue to fight the case because the middle class continued to be shoved around with their backs up against a wall. Phoenix Board Member Pershing Broome commented that he would vote against going to the Supreme Court if the district did not have enough money as he was for education first and the court order second. Board Member Robert Zeilenga felt the district’s rights had been violated and commented that he built his home
in South Holland so that his children could attend the local school. Mr. Hendrix moved that the district appeal the decision issuing the permanent injunction to the U.S. Court of Appeals. The motion was approved by all seven board members.

After agreeing unanimously to appeal the permanent injunction, the board was unable to come to together to approve a teacher training program paid for with federal desegregation funds. The diversity training program covered teaching techniques, testing, continuous development and effective use of materials for five administrators and fifty-six teachers. Dr. Van Dam informed the board that this program was being offered to the school district because they were involved in the desegregation court case and would offer support to teachers in learning to deal with racial tensions. Board Member Richard Graf stated that he would never vote to accept help to integrate the district when the board was still in the process of appealing their case. Other board members referred to the program as a ‘human relations’ course and wanted no part of it. Board Member Pershing Broome commented that he thought a human relations seminar would be a good thing for the community. Board President Mr. Wiersma commented that he would vote for the program as long as Dr. Van Dam had control over the materials used with the staff. After discussion the program was defeated four to three with board members Zeilenga, Graf, Bennett, and Hendrix opposing the motion and Wiersma, Meeder, and

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140 *South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes*, May 19, 1969.
It was not until the June 2, 1969 board meeting that the Title I funds were finally approved for teacher in-service training. Dr. Van Dam, upset by some of the board member’s comments, emphasized the merits of the teacher training program stating he was:

…trying to do something about preparing my teachers for next fall. I want to train the teachers to do a job. I want a solid program, not a bunch of hogwash. I’m not anxious to human relate the district…and those who come into the district will do so only with my approval.\textsuperscript{142}

On Thursday, May 22, 1969 the Neighborhood Schools Committee met at the Thornton Township Hall to discuss Judge Hoffman’s decision and what future action would be taken (see Figure 23). Board President Louis Wiersma was present along with Village President Harold Gouwens. Mr. Wiersma informed the crowd that the school board’s attorneys would attempt to secure an emergency hearing from the Court of Appeals in hopes of appealing Judge Hoffman’s permanent injunction. He stated it was necessary to file these motions prior to taking the case to the United States Appellate Court. Village President Mr. Gouwens made it clear that the Village handled its own business and did not interfere with the school’s handling of their business. However, Mr. Gouwens did say that he was in complete agreement with the board’s decision to appeal and believed in the neighborhood school concept. Former school board member and Neighborhood School Committee Member Mr. Hobart Krillic stated his concern regarding the desegregation of the schools and believed the district was being used to

\textsuperscript{141}“Dist. 151 School Board To Appeal Court Case,” \textit{Dolton Pointer}, May 22, 1969. South Holland School District 151 Newspaper Archive Collection, Volume III.

\textsuperscript{142}“SD 151 Board Finally Approves Summer Course for Teachers,” \textit{South Holland Tribune}, June 8, 1969. South Holland School District 151 Newspaper Archive Collection, Volume III.
compile a body of law so that it might be used against all northern school districts later.\textsuperscript{143}

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\caption{NSC Unity in the Community Meeting May 22, 1969}
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\textbf{Figure 23. NSC Unity in the Community Meeting May 22, 1969}

Dr. Van Dam continued to focus on the needs of students and staff despite the permanent injunction, the Neighborhood Schools Committee, and the feelings expressed by several board members. He believed that a solid educational program would encourage families to support the district. Dr. Van Dam endeavored to hire experienced teachers using a new salary schedule; increased curricular materials; required lesson plans to be submitted each Friday; required monthly instructional reports from administrators; issued a monthly newsletter, and formed Title committees to submit proposals. However, a suggestion to the board to establish a Community Advisory Council was shelved due to the district’s prior involvement with such a committee. Dr.

\textsuperscript{143}“In District 151 Appeal to Ask for Emergency Hearing,” \textit{South Holland Tribune}, May 25, 1969. South Holland School District 151 Newspaper Archive Collection, Volume III.
Van Dam felt such a committee would be beneficial only when the community understood the needs of the school district. Dr. Van Dam, hoping to secure a grant from the federal government to build a new upper grade center and eliminate a major complaint against busing White children to the old Coolidge School in Phoenix, went to Washington, D.C. He was previously told by officials of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare who had visited the district, of a school district in Mississippi undergoing desegregation that received federal Title I money to construct a school. Dr. Van Dam confirmed with the superintendent of Albany, Mississippi that his district received the funds. He attended a hearing with the Director of H.E.W. and requested the same support for his district. The director questioned other members present at the hearing. They denied such an incident had occurred. Dr. Van Dam left Washington with no federal Title I funds and learned an accommodation must have been made with state and federal H.E.W. officials with political help from their Mississippi congressmen.\(^{144}\)

On Friday, June 6, 1969 Judge Hoffman reviewed three petitions presented by Board Attorney Mr. Ronald Glink. A petition to proceed with summer school was presented, which Judge Hoffman refused to rule on it stating that summer school was not an issue in the case. This allowed for the district to carry out its current summer school program. The second petition included additional financial evidence to be presented on behalf of the school district indicating the district would be out of money by the end of the next year. The third petition was a request for either a new trial or a stay on the order

\(^{144}\) Van Dam, *Who’s First on the Bus*, pp. 116-117.
redistributing the students within the district. Judge Hoffman stated that the defendants did not present any new information that would warrant a new trial and he denied the request for a stay of the order.145

**Impact of Declining Enrollment**

At the June 16, 1969 regular board meeting, a discussion was held regarding the decreasing district enrollment and the need to consider closing the Coolidge School and moving the upper grade center to Taft School. Board President Mr. Wiersma proposed that Kennedy School be maintained as a 6th grade center, while Madison, Roosevelt, and Eisenhower would house the kindergarten through 5th grade students. This preliminary consideration was based on a parent survey that indicated 1,375 students planned to return and the parents of another 305 had definitely decided not to enroll their children in the fall, while another 222 parents said they were still undecided.146 Board member Mr. Broome suggested that the district should also consider making Roosevelt the Upper Grade Center but cautioned the board in moving too fast without first waiting until they knew exactly the number of students transferring out and what the Appellate Court ruling might hold.147

On August 4, 1969 Board President Mr. Wiersma read a letter from their attorney informing the board that the Appellate Court emergency motion which was filed

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147“Principal, Board Cite Drawbacks,” *South Holland Tribune*, June 19, 1969. South Holland School District 151 Newspaper Archive Collection, Volume III.
immediately after Judge Hoffman’s permanent injunction decision in May, 1969 had been denied. The school district had requested that the Appellate Court stay the order to change the Kennedy School to a sixth grade center from a kindergarten through second grade center. Judge F. Ryan Duffy once again represented the dissenting vote. 148

More vandalism occurred. A fire had been set on August 10, 1969 at the Kennedy School gym where fifty cardboard boxes containing newly purchased Title I reading materials was stored. An attempt was also made to start a fire in the Coolidge Upper Grade Center as kerosene was poured through a broken window, but a lighted paper failed to reach the kerosene. An anonymous call was made to the South Holland police department and the Phoenix police and fire departments informing them of the fire. The Illinois Crime Laboratory conducted an investigation, however, no one was ever charged with the crime. 149

The 1969-1970 school year began quietly as the district entered its second year under the court order. Superintendent Dr. Van Dam continued to focus on providing the best education possible for the students of the district. He presented the board a list of 36 goals centered on educational programs, personnel, facilities, communications and community relations, and finances. 150 Meanwhile, the Justice Department threatened the Chicago Public Schools with a federal suit if they did not desegregate their teaching staff.


149 Van Dam, Who’s First on the Bus, p. 117.

Governor Ogilvie and the Chicago newspapers supported the Chicago Public Schools.

These actions prompted Board President Mr. Wiersma to instruct Superintendent Dr. Van Dam to write a letter to the Governor and copy the local and Chicago newspapers stating:

School District 151 has been under Federal Court Order since July 8, 1968...Your sudden concern for the Chicago school system, in reference to the Federal ultimatum and your appeal to the Federal authorities to delay the order, surprises this school district. For almost two years this school district has fought the Federal Government alone, with no support from anyone, seeking to democratically and legally resolve a court order that dictates school policy that attempts to change social attitudes held by this community...If political pressure is brought to bear on the Federal authorities, because Chicago is big and powerful, to alleviate the order now facing the Chicago School System, then the same decision should apply to small school district 151.\textsuperscript{151}

A response to the letter was never received by the district.

Resistance to the desegregation order continued to be reflected in the number of students transferring out of the district. According to the September 22, 1969 Status Report, the actual enrollment as of September 12, 1969 was 2,124 students; while at the same time the previous year there were 2,564 students enrolled.\textsuperscript{152} Superintendent Dr. Van Dam continued to search for ways to fund the educational programs within the district. He contacted the mayors of South Holland, Harvey and Phoenix on the advice of Ray Page, Superintendent of Public Instruction, hoping to secure some financial assistance through the state income tax revenue the cities collected. He was not successful. Harvey Mayor Jim Haines responded that they were unable to assist as the city carried similar debt as the school district and commented that school districts


\textsuperscript{152} South Holland School District 151 Status Report, September 22, 1969.
currently received 75 percent of the existing tax dollars and could not receive more.

South Holland Mayor Harold Gouwens stated any excess dollars above and beyond those needed for the Village should be returned to the taxpayers to reduce their real estate tax bills. The district did not receive a response from the Phoenix Village Board.\textsuperscript{153}

\textbf{President Nixon’s Policy on Desegregation}

The election of President Richard Nixon in 1969, with the support of the southern states, led to a secret meeting to discuss rising southern anger over administration policies mostly over school desegregation, patronage, and foreign policy. Southern chairmen cautioned President Nixon’s White House Aides that the lack of any change in the school integration policies went against the understanding throughout the south that Mr. Nixon promised to ease President Johnson’s school desegregation guidelines. It was inferred by the Chair that President Nixon would not have southern support in 1972 if changes were not made. Attorney General John Mitchell and Health, Education and Welfare Secretary Robert Finch met to discuss the necessity of moving against de facto school segregation with the same gusto they were showing against southern dual school systems. Seeking to pacify the southern states, federal action was focused on two specific non-southern areas already under court ordered desegregation; Pasadena, California and South Holland, Illinois. This helped provide some relief to the south as being the sole federal target.\textsuperscript{154}

On March 25, 1970 \textit{The New York Times} ran the text of President Nixon’s statement

\textsuperscript{153}“Village Unable To Aid SD 151,” \textit{South Holland Tribune}, September 25, 1969. South Holland School District 151 Newspaper Archive Collection, Vol. III.

explaining his policy on school desegregation. President Nixon made clear his
affirmation of the Brown decision and that constitutional mandates would be enforced
while maintaining that local school boards should be given primary weight in devising
local compliance plans stating:

That the argument that effective desegregation might cause white families
to flee the neighborhood cannot be used to sustain devices designed to
perpetuate segregation…That when geographic zoning is combined with
“free transfers,” and the effect of the transfer privilege is to perpetuate
segregation despite the zoning, the plan is unacceptable…The obligation
of every school district is to terminate dual systems at once and to operate
now and hereafter only unitary schools…In devising local compliance
plans, primary weight should be given to the considered judgment of local
school boards—provided they act in good faith and within constitutional
limits…The neighborhood school will be deemed the most appropriate
base for such a system…Transportation of pupils beyond normal
geographic school zones for the purpose of achieving racial balance will
not be required.\(^{155}\)

The South Holland School District 151 attorney John Vander Aa believed that if
President Nixon’s school integration guidelines had been in place in April 1968, the
school district would never have been ordered to integrate adding that many of the
President’s statements were similar to the points raised in the district’s appeal.
Neighborhood Schools Committee members felt the President’s statement would support
the appeal hearing scheduled for April 21, 1970.\(^{156}\)

On April 30, 1970 the United States Court of Appeals asked the counsel for the
school district to work with the Justice Department on a plan “that all the people of the

\(^{155}\)United States of America vs. School District 151 of Cook County, Illinois, No. 17754, Civil
Action No. 68C755, Appendix Volume I, Text of the President’s Statement Explaining His Policy on

file); May 29, 1970; ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Chicago Tribune (1849-1988) pg. A6.
district can live with.” The Justices issued oral orders to work out a plan for a centrally located upper grade center and to report back to the court in 30 days to determine whether such a plan had been worked out.157 The South Holland School District 151 Board of Education approved a plan to be submitted to the United States Court of Appeals which consisted of building a centrally located upper grade center by 1971 with Phoenix’s K-2 children attending Kennedy and 3rd through 6th graders attending Coolidge having the option to voluntarily transfer to the four white K-6th grade schools. The Justice Department rejected the plan and notified the Appellate Court that they wanted the 3rd through 6th grade students bused and the Kennedy School could not be an all-Black school. It was the board’s plan to secure federal funds available to school districts facing court ordered desegregation to build a new school and the district would remain desegregated based on Plan C. The board’s attorney, Mr. Ronald Glink planned to go to Washington, D.C. to see if federal funds would be available to implement a new desegregation plan for South Holland. The Neighborhoods Schools Committee (NSC) was angered by the board’s plan and wanted the district to revert back to K-8 neighborhood schools. On June 15, 1970 the NSC presented a petition to the board signed by 1600 parents and taxpayers to be given to the three judges of the Appellate Court stating the residents of South Holland would not support a plan that continued the

Coolidge School in Phoenix as a federally created upper grade center nor would they support any building bond issue or tax rate increase.\textsuperscript{158}

Meanwhile, on July 8, 1970 the United States District Court charged seven real estate firms, three of which were located in South Holland, with depriving minority people the right to purchase property in the community. The Riverdale office of the Tri-City Human Relations Council whose investigations led to the discrimination lawsuits was fire bombed on July 12, 1970. No one was ever charged.\textsuperscript{159}

**U.S. Court of Appeals Upholds Judge Hoffman’s Ruling**

The South Holland School District 151 Board of Education was notified in September 1970 of the United States Court of Appeals decision to uphold Judge Hoffman’s desegregation plan by a vote of 2 to 1. Judge Hoffman’s court order allowed busing for K-2 Phoenix children to be a matter of choice. The board’s attorneys believed this weakened the Justice Department’s position on total integration thus forcing the board to take their case to the United States Supreme Court. On December 6, 1970 the attorneys for South Holland School District 151 Board of Education filed a brief with the Supreme Court asking for the case to be heard. The district charged that Judge Hoffman accepted the Justice Department’s findings of fact and conclusions of law while none of

\textsuperscript{158} Van Dam, *Who’s First on the Bus*, pp. 127-131.

\textsuperscript{159}“Probe Fire Bombing Incident,” *South Holland Tribune*, July 16, 1970. South Holland School District 151 Newspaper Archive Collection, Vol. III.
the defendant’s contentions or testimony was accepted. The Justice Department requested that the Supreme Court not hear the case.\textsuperscript{160}

Dr. Van Dam continued to support a strong educational program despite the financial struggles stating:

Financially the cupboard is bare. No working cash, no contingency funds, state aid overpayments are being deducted from the regular state aid payments throughout the year. Large blocks of Tax Anticipation Warrants (TAW) against next year’s taxes will be made by adopting an early budget for next year after January 1\textsuperscript{st}. During the present 1970-1971 school year, there will be approximately $600,000 in outstanding TAWs.\textsuperscript{161}

With enrollment declining and the continued failed attempts to pass a tax increase, the board discussed the possibility of closing two schools at the October 1970 board meeting. Dr. Van Dam applied for aid under Title 45 Emergency School Aid Act for $262,000. The district received notice from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare informing them that their request for funds under Title 45 would be put on hold until such time the Supreme Court rendered a decision in their case. A referendum was held November 7, 1970 asking voters to consider increasing the Education Fund tax rate and support a building fund referendum which once again resulted in a defeat of 721 yeas to 1,383 nays, and 669 yeas to 1,434 nays, respectively.\textsuperscript{162}

The board Finance Committee continued to look for ways to cut the budget recommending at the January 18, 1971 board meeting, the elimination of twelve (12) teaching positions and increasing class size. Teachers attended the board meeting asking

\textsuperscript{160} Van Dam, \textit{Who’s First on the Bus}, p. 139.

\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., p. 133.

\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., pp. 135-136.
the board to reconsider the cuts they were planning including saving the individualized student reading program. A parent requested the board save the perceptual training program needed for her child’s visual handicap. Board member Mr. Meeder requested that Dr. Van Dam seek an extension to perform the Life Safety improvements to Madison School due to the district’s lack of funds. The Title III grant proposal was delayed due to the completion of a needs assessment component required by the state superintendent’s office. The Title III grant director sent a letter to Dr. Van Dam assuring him that everything possible would be done to expedite the processing of the grant once he received the needs assessment and stated the proposal had an excellent possibility for funding. The grant however, was denied due to its delay.163

Dr. Van Dam, the Township Treasurer and Board Member Mr. Kmiec met with State Senator Charles Claybough, Chairman of the Illinois Problems Commission, in February 1971 to discuss the district’s need for funding under court ordered desegregation. Dr. Van Dam described the impact of the court ordered desegregation upon the community and the district’s finances. The township treasurer affirmed the district’s financial problems and reminded the commission that the State Board of Education and its legal office were partly responsible for failing to enforce the Armstrong Act at the time the Phoenix parents met with Superintendent Ray Page. Senator Claybough expressed his sympathies to the township treasurer but stated he had absolutely no sympathy for the community as they continue to display their stubbornness

over the welfare of the children. Dr. Van Dam continued to seek help from state legislators to grant special aid to the school district or help stop requiring the district to pay back $298,000 in state aid due to the loss of over a thousand students.\footnote{Van Dam, \textit{Who's First on the Bus}, p. 142.}

On May 3, 1971 the Supreme Court notified South Holland School District 151 that they would not hear their case; upholding the lower court’s decision. Northern school districts had a duty to ease racial imbalance, even when it was caused by housing patterns. The Supreme Court noted the district’s initial order to desegregate in 1968, the Federal District Court’s order in 1969 directing the district to stop racially discriminatory practices, and the Federal Court of Appeals affirmation of the order in September 1970.\footnote{“Illinois Integration Appeal is Denied,” \textit{Chicago Tribune} (1963-Current file); May 4, 1971; ProQuest Historical Newspapers \textit{Chicago Tribune} (1849-1987), p. 7.} The Neighborhoods Schools Committee Chair and former District 151 Board Member Mr. Hannes Johnson commented at the May 3, 1971 board meeting on the apathy of the committee’s members in continuing the fight against busing. Phoenix Mayor and former District 151 Board Member, Mr. L. K. Watkins expressed hope that the community would come together in support of their schools and noted there were never problems between the White and Black students as much as there were between White and Black adults in understanding the district’s circumstances. Mr. Watkins discussed the misperceptions by White residents who believed they were being asked to pay for busing and Black residents who believed they were being asked to pay for legal
fees to fight the court order which resulted in a lack of support for the schools. At the May 17, 1971 board meeting NSC Chairman Mr. Hannes Johnson asked that Dr. Van Dam tone down his statements regarding the future of the community. Dr. Van Dam had referred to the lack of community support for the schools and looming financial collapse of the district if a referendum is not passed. He commented that a further exodus of students from the district due to the acceptance of the desegregation order made it essential to ask the local newspapers to help publicize the quality of the educational programs in School District 151 including:

- The continuous development of reading and math programs
- The perceptually handicapped program
- The pre-kindergarten gifted program
- The teacher in-service training programs
- The speech program
- The gifted Great Books program
- The minority history program
- The new middle school teaming program
- The math manipulative program
- The mini-reading laboratories; and
- The managerial effectiveness and leadership program

Dr. Van Dam challenged the community to support the school district with hopes of bringing back students who left to attend private schools. The board was no longer

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166 “S. Holland Schools Give Up Fight Against Pupil Busing,” William Gaines; Carolyn Toll. Chicago Tribune (1963-Current file); May 9, 1971; ProQuest Historical Newspaper; Chicago Tribune (1849-1088), p. W_B3.

167 Van Dam, Who’s First on the Bus, p. 159.
going to fight the court ordered desegregation and was determined to provide the best educational experience for its students despite the financial condition of the district.\textsuperscript{168}

Dr. Van Dam continued to speak out against the lack of funding support needed when a school district is ordered to undergo desegregation. In an interview with the Chicago Tribune on January 9, 1972, Dr. Van Dam discussed how the district lost funds under a proposal which would have provided money for teacher salaries, aides, and the perceptually handicapped program because the state would not acknowledge a seven-day deadline extension granted by the former State Superintendent Ray Page. The district was also forced to turn down $11,000 for disadvantaged students that would have required the district to violate the federal court order by pulling Black students and segregating them for instruction. Dr. Van Dam also acknowledged the loss of over 1000 students due to the desegregation order resulting in a loss of over $1 million in state aid.\textsuperscript{169}

**Court Approved Closing of Roosevelt and Kennedy Schools**

With the continued decline in enrollment, the loss of state aid, and the lack of financial support by the school community the board considered the reorganization of the district in March 1972. Several plans were reviewed including closing Coolidge School in Phoenix and moving the upper grade center to Taft, Roosevelt, or Eisenhower and/or the closing of Roosevelt, Madison, or Kennedy schools, keeping Coolidge as the upper

\textsuperscript{168}South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, May 17, 1971, pp. 1-4.

\textsuperscript{169}“South Holland Schools Offer Integration Clues,” Jack Houston; William Gaines; Chicago Tribune (1963-Current file); Jan. 9, 1972; ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Chicago Tribune (1849-1988), p. W10.
grade center. African American Board Member Mr. Pershing Broome commented that Judge Hoffman would not permit the closing of any school in Phoenix. The Phoenix Action Coalition met to oppose the closing of the Coolidge School and moving the upper grade center to Taft School in the Harvey Highlands area. They proposed that the Roosevelt School be closed. Taft residents opposed the moving of the upper grade center to their school as they did not want to lose their K-6 neighborhood school. The board elected to petition the United States District Court to close Coolidge School in September 1972 and use Taft or Roosevelt School as the upper grade center with the Kennedy 6th graders assigned to the present K-5 buildings. Kennedy School would be used for the kindergarten children of Phoenix and special education classes. Mr. Pershing Broome was the only dissenting vote and proposed closing Kennedy School and keeping Coolidge as the upper grade center with the 6th graders attending the current K-5 buildings. The petition was denied by Judge Hoffman in April 1972 citing a “lack of evidence” stating if he were to allow the petition it would disregard the mandate of the United States Supreme Court in the Brown decision. The board then proposed the closing of two schools – Roosevelt School in South Holland and Kennedy School in Phoenix. A second hearing on the reorganization plan of the district was held in May 1972 proposing that Coolidge School remain as the upper grade center and assigning the Kennedy 6th grade students to the remaining three K-6 buildings. The Roosevelt K-6 students would be assigned to the Eisenhower and Madison Schools. This would result in all the K-6 Phoenix students having to be bused from their neighborhood Kennedy School. Witnesses testifying for and against the petition were subjected to three sets of attorneys:
the federal attorneys, the intervening Phoenix Coalition attorneys, and School District 151 attorneys. Judge Hoffman announced his decision on August 30, 1972 to close the Kennedy and Roosevelt Schools. However, it was not delivered in writing until September 7, 1972 after school had already started resulting in the district beginning school on Wednesday, September 6 with all six schools opened; closed on Thursday, September 7 to move materials and furniture; and reopened with four schools on Friday, September 8. The Kennedy School was soon rented to the ECHO educational cooperative and the Phoenix Headstart program.\footnote{170}

The South Holland School District 151 Board of Education moved to place a tax referendum on the ballot in October 1972. However, the Phoenix Action Coalition vowed it would not support the tax rate increase. Phoenix residents feared the money raised from the referendum would be used to build a new upper grade center resulting in all their children being bused to South Holland. The referendum failed to garner the support the district needed with 564 yeas to 1,561 nays. The district’s finance chair and Board Member Mr. Stasiak, remarked how the parents of the children of the district were not interested enough to support the board and were voting based on rumors. The board voted to try another referendum in December 1972 resulting in 361 yeas to 1,368 nays, once again, failing to pass a referendum.\footnote{171}

Dr. Van Dam’s continued insistence on maintaining a high quality educational program helped him to secure the cooperation of the board, administrators, and PTA

\footnote{170}Van Dam, \textit{Who’s First on the Bus}, pp. 176-183.

\footnote{171}Ibid., pp. 184-187.
members to support the district in joining the North Central Association regional school accreditation agency. This accreditation process forced the school district to undergo evaluative criteria that validated the district’s school programs. A feasibility study was conducted by Dr. Melvin Heller and Dr. Max Bailey of Loyola University in April 1973. Their findings as presented to the board, stated:

> The administration has managed and continues to manage the financial resources of the district in an intelligent, productive and cost conscious manner. Severe cut-backs in program and personnel would seriously hurt the educational opportunities of students. Within the schools there was no evidence of the usual problems associated with desegregated schools. There is a very mature and matter of fact relationship between teachers, students, and administration. South Holland 151 has kept racial tension out of the classrooms. Negative reaction to busing by the community hasn’t influenced the teachers or pupils. The reading and math programs are excellent, but Coolidge needs to be renovated.\(^{172}\)

The ninth referendum in November 1975 was defeated despite the school district staff winning competitive grants for funds that brought additional teachers, aides, materials and equipment to individualize instruction for students. Dr. Van Dam continued to recognize the professionalism of the teaching staff as they fully participated in decisions with the administration and board. An eighth grade student from Coolidge School’s graduating class described the Coolidge staff:

> Their involvement and concern for our well being certainly doesn’t go unnoticed and unappreciated. They’re a rare bunch and I’m sure we hope to run across many people like them through the years…Actually, I think we’re very fortunate to be the class of ’76, the year of our country’s 200\(^{th}\) birthday, because ever since we began being bused when we were in first

\(^{172}\)Ibid., p. 201.
grade, we proved to ourselves and others that we can succeed in getting a
good education, no matter where we’re taught.\textsuperscript{173}

The district’s enrollment continue to drop during the 1976 school year, however,
reading scores in District 151 improved at all grade levels. The Community Advisory
Council continued to work on goals for the district with hopes of overcoming community
hostility due to busing white students into the black Phoenix residential area. The council
continued to work to win support for a referendum from the elderly, private and parochial
parents, and the district’s own White parents.\textsuperscript{174}

In May 1977 the board agreed to sell Life Safety bonds to address the building
needs at Coolidge School. The plan was to renovate the old Coolidge School into a
modern upper grade center complete with a gymnasium and a connecting section between
Kennedy and Coolidge Schools. The district’s architect prepared the plans for submittal
to the State’s Life Safety Director for approval. The president of the Neighborhood
Schools Committee (NSC) and two South Holland citizens filed an injunction to stop the
Coolidge renovations. They based the challenge on their opinion that the work to be
completed was not considered Life Safety. The school board replaced their attorney with
Mr. Anthony Scariano who appeared before Judge Berg assuring him the district was
moving forward with their plans and demonstrated that the work was indeed considered
Life Safety. Judge Berg ruled in favor of the district and allowed the renovations to
Coolidge School under Life Safety. Only one high bid was received because the NSC

\textsuperscript{173} Ibid., p. 235.

\textsuperscript{174} Ibid., pp. 236-237.
made it known that they would appeal the decision which deterred companies from bidding. The board’s attorney filed a countersuit against the three plaintiffs for damages for unreasonably delaying the project. Because of the countersuit, the plaintiffs waived their right to appeal Judge Berg’s dismissal of their suit if the board agreed to not bring charges against them. The board rebid the renovation of Coolidge in June 1978 with a planned completion date of September 1979.\textsuperscript{175} The Coolidge upper grade center renovations included a library, band room, vocal music room, special art classroom, home-economics room, expanded science facilities, sewing room, and new gymnasium with shower facilities and gym office.\textsuperscript{176}

Several more tax referendums were defeated as the district struggled to stay afloat. The financial condition of the district forced the board to release tenured teachers with non-renewable honorable dismissal notices. The teachers knew they would be brought back if enrollment increased by September and agreed to keep the same salary schedule for a two-year period. For the first time in fifteen (15) years the enrollment increased from 983 students in June 1983 to 1,010 students in September 1984. On November 8, 1983 a tax referendum was defeated by 398 yeas to 1,342 nays. Once again teachers and administrators put together a cut list to save money to keep the schools open.

**Passage of the 1984 Tax Referendum**

The fifteenth referendum since 1968 was scheduled for March 20, 1984. A concerted effort was put forth to encourage a positive outcome. Village boards, civic and

\textsuperscript{175} Ibid., pp. 254, 261, 263.

business organizations were asked to place ads urging the citizens of South Holland to support the referendum. The Coolidge School Band played at the Senior Holland Home located in South Holland. Dr. Van Dam met with the boards of the private schools, churches, business organizations, and District151 parent/student meetings. He also helped to plan with teachers, students and board members a Saturday morning parade which was held on March 17, 1984. The parade attracted large crowds as they marched through South Holland, Harvey and Phoenix carrying signs in support of the referendum. The referendum vote on March 20, 1984 certified by the board of education showed:

1,577 yeas to 1,575 nays. The referendum passed by two votes resulting in an increase in the education tax rate to $1.63 from $1.28 after fifteen years of trying.\footnote{Van Dam, \textit{Who’s First on the Bus}, pp. 277-278.}

By September, 1986 the board received notice from Dr. Van Dam that he would be retiring at the end of the 1986-1987 school year. Dr. Van Dam continued to focus on improving the educational programs for the children of the school district. The North Central Association (NCA) evaluation team completely evaluated the district’s programs, personnel and facilities in October 1986. The NCA report, presented at the December 8, 1986 board meeting, offered district staff several recommendations for improvement including: move to grade level meetings and create grade level assessments; work with grades 4, 5, and 6 to provide staff training in math instruction; combine the reading and language arts instructional time; allocate more funds for school libraries; develop a sequential science program; implement physical education five days a week; more space,
time, and materials were needed by the art, music and band teachers; and coordinate the
guidance and counseling services for students. Administrators, teachers, and staff,
continued to demonstrate their commitment to the students by submitting a three year
plan identifying the achievement goals recommended by the NCA at the February 9,
1987 board meeting.\textsuperscript{178}

In his memoir \textit{Who’s First on the Bus}, Dr. Van Dam reflected on the past 19 years
and the many challenges faced by the district. He did not believe the school community
supported a desegregated school system since the referendum only passed by two votes.
Dr. Van Dam reviewed the February 1986 Status Report and noted the change in what
was once the white majority-black minority racial composition of the district to a black
majority-white minority; revealing an enrollment of 1,033 students comprised of 47% White and 53% Black. The changing minority representation in the public schools
continued to raise concerns about the racial stability of the community and the school
district. However, his belief that a continuous focus on providing an excellent school
program would bring stability to the school district proved successful. There were many
voices heard from people whose views “pierced the hearts and minds” of the district’s
parents, their children, teachers, administrators, and board members. According to Dr.
Van Dam, he was disappointed that he did not hear from the school community’s elected

\textsuperscript{178}Ibid., p. 282.
officials, business people, civic associations, and homeowners who quietly stood by and watched; then voted for the destruction of their own school district.\textsuperscript{179}

Mrs. Buckner described Dr. Van Dam as someone who would sometimes bend the truth to the advantage of what he wanted to do; someone who was a real go-getter and enjoyed mixing it up with local politicians to get available grant money. She reflected on his tenure in the district commenting that Dr. Van Dam was not trusted by the Phoenix community because of his name and they felt he was hired to preserve the integrity of South Holland. Mrs. Buckner believed that Dr. Van Dam was hired because the board felt he could control the Black community due to his experiences as an administrator within predominately Black communities. Through the years they worked together well and he supported her appointment as Principal of Coolidge School. “You can’t take that away from him. He did what he was supposed to do, calm the waters” (Buckner interview, pp. 86-87). On April 2, 1987 the board approved the employment of Dr. Janice B. Potter as Superintendent of Schools for the period July 1, 1987 to June 30, 1990.

\textsuperscript{179}Ibid., p. 283.
CHAPTER IV
SUPERINTENDENTS 1987-2010

Dr. Janice B. Potter

Dr. Janice B. Potter served as Superintendent for South Holland School District 151 from July 1, 1987 through July 7, 1989. Dr. Potter’s previous experiences include serving as an Assistant Superintendent at a school district in Wheaton, Illinois and as the Business Manager for the South Metropolitan Association for Low Incidence Handicapped (SMA) (Hamilton interview). There were no available records or news articles that highlighted Dr. Potter’s professional background or education. Dr. Potter’s service took place amid a more peaceful and less contentious school environment. The board minutes do not reflect any specific concerns and only highlight some of the recommendations she brought forth to the board for approval. The board welcomed Dr. Potter to her first board meeting on July 13, 1987. According to Mrs. Buckner, Dr. Potter implemented several new organizational practices throughout the district. One noted change was in the writing of the board meeting minutes which reflected a more general description of board meetings with less detail. Dr. Potter also secured authorization by the board to approve textbook and supply orders not to exceed $35,000. This helped prevent delays in materials and supplies as Dr. Potter prepared for the opening of school.¹ Mrs. Buckner described Dr. Potter as someone who initially came into the position

demonstrating strong leadership; however she encountered difficulty in gaining the support of the administrative staff. Dr. Potter required that each building’s activity account be turned over and handled by her office as well as all mail should come to her first for review because she wanted to get familiar with all the vendors. This was perceived by the administrators as a lack of trust on her part for their ability to handle these duties (Buckner Interview, pp. 81-83).

The State of Illinois notified the district of impending funding cuts to the Pre-Kindergarten program and the board was faced with the yearly decision of whether or not to continue the program. Dr. Potter recommended holding the Pre-Kindergarten program at 80 students and continued housing it at Madison and Taft Schools which the board approved. Board President Mr. Lanting moved to authorize Dr. Potter to become trained in the Strategic Planning Model and she was also directed to employ a part-time public relations officer. Dr. Potter recommended the continuation of summer school based on the availability of grant dollars received and participated in the recognition of the district’s teaching staff on National Teachers Day.

On June 3, 1988, Dr. Potter submitted a letter of resignation to the board. There was no indication as to the reason for her resignation. After discussion with the board, Dr. Potter agreed to withdraw her resignation. Mrs. Buckner described Dr. Potter as

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3 South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes March 21, 1988, p. 2.

4 South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes April 11, 1988, p. 2.

somewhat fragile in her demeanor after beginning the year with a strong presence. The administrators were addressed by the board on several occasions to improve their treatment of her. Mrs. Buckner commented that Dr. Potter had to overcome the comparisons made between her and Dr. Van Dam. The administrative staff had worked so long with Dr. Van Dam and had become accustomed to his laissez-faire style of leadership demonstrated near the end of his term. They felt Dr. Van Dam trusted them more with daily operations (Buckner interview, pp. 81-83).

At the October 3, 1988 board meeting a group of parents voiced their concerns regarding classroom size at Madison and Taft Schools. The fourth grade classroom at Madison and the third grade classroom at Taft each contained 34 students. Dr. Potter was directed to assess the situation and give her recommendation at a special board meeting on October 20, 1988. Dr. Potter recommended that each class be split to accommodate smaller class sizes to which the board agreed.⁶ Throughout the two year period Dr. Potter served as superintendent, several textbooks and curriculums were approved by the board including Scott Foresman Reading Series, Houghton/Mifflin Math, Silver Burdette Social Studies, Drug Education for grades 5 and 6, and AIDS Education for grade 6.⁷

Dr. Potter continued to maintain the stability of the district and submitted the required Status Reports to the federal government for monitoring. On July 6, 1989 Board President Mr. Boender moved to accept the retirement of Dr. Potter effective July 7, 1989. Mrs. Buckner currently the Principal of Coolidge was contacted between 8:00 p.m.

⁶South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes October 3 and October 20, 1988.

⁷ South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes March 8, 1988; February 6, 1989; March 7, 1989; and May 1, 1989.
and 9:00 p.m. the same evening and asked if she would consider taking over the position of Superintendent the following morning to which she replied “fine” (Buckner interview, p. 79). On July 18, 1989 Mr. Boender moved to offer Mrs. Jessica Buckner a one year Superintendent contract to cover the 1989-1990 school year (see Figure 24). According to the board minutes, the motion was approved unanimously.\footnote{South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes July 7, 1989 and July 18, 1989.} In discussion with Mrs. Buckner, however, she stated the board voted 4 to 3 appointing her Superintendent.

\begin{figure}[h]
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\caption{Mrs. Jessica Buckner, Superintendent of South Holland School District 151 from 1989 to 1994. Photo by C. Heiberger, June, 2012.}
\end{figure}

\textbf{Figure 24.} Mrs. Jessica Buckner

\textbf{Mrs. Jessica Buckner}

Mrs. Jessica Buckner served as the first African American Superintendent for the school district from July 1989 through June 1994. Her involvement in the 1968 desegregation lawsuit against the district provided the foundation for her never ending commitment to secure an equitable education for all students of District 151.

Mrs. Buckner began her teaching career in 1959 with South Holland School District 151 before attaining her district’s Master Teacher designation in 1971.
January 1979 Mrs. Buckner completed her administrative degree in order to assume the role of Principal at Coolidge Upper Grade Center which Dr. Van Dam administered until she received her certification. Mrs. Buckner while working for a predominantly White board described herself as an enigma because the board fought against integration for a long period of time while she fought for integration behind the scenes and eventually was appointed to lead the district (Buckner interview, p. 106).

**District Sixth Graders Move to Coolidge School**

It was during Mrs. Buckner’s first year as Superintendent that she served in a dual role as Superintendent of the district and Principal of Coolidge School. The district was concerned with the issue of over-enrollment at the elementary schools and discussed the idea of moving the district’s 6th grade students to Coolidge School in Phoenix. Mrs. Buckner worked with the district’s advisory committee members to make this happen for the 1991-92 school year. The board’s attorney Mr. John Canna contacted the Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division to inform them of the district’s demographic changes since the entry of the 1969 and 1972 desegregation orders. He reported the district’s plan to move the sixth grade out of the three elementary schools into a single facility. Mr. John Dunne of the Department of Justice responded that modifications to desegregation orders are routine and usually there were no objections to the changes made for educational and economic reasons so long as they did not impede desegregation. Mr. Canna also requested a review of School District 151 to determine if it

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9South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes September 18, 1978.

10 South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes April 2, 1990, p. 2.
was a unitary system. Mr. Dunne agreed to a review and requested that information be sent to him related to the operation of the school district before any determination was made. Mrs. Buckner responded to Mr. Dunne’s request providing detailed information related to student assignment, faculty, staff, transportation, extracurricular activities and facilities. She explained how the district’s Advisory Committee and Strategic Planning Committee, both of which were bi-racial, recommended the moving of approximately 100 district 6th grade students to the Coolidge Upper Grade Center in order to relieve the over-crowded elementary buildings.

At the end of Mrs. Buckner’s first year as Superintendent, she recommended Mr. Douglas Hamilton as Principal of Coolidge Junior High School which the board approved at their June 4, 1990 meeting. According to Mrs. Buckner she told Dr. Hamilton in the hallway that she had to have him on her staff and he was not to sign a contract with Dr. Retter of ECHO. Mrs. Buckner described Dr. Hamilton as someone she could count on and he understood how to work with all people (Buckner interview pg. 89). The following month, Mr. Berthard Mitchell, Jr. was appointed Assistant Superintendent for South Holland School District 151.

Dr. Hamilton worked successfully with Mrs. Buckner to secure the support of the school community in moving the district’s 6th grade students to Coolidge Junior High

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School at the start of the 1991-1992 school year. This allowed for more room at each of
the elementary schools as enrollment slowly climbed from 1,013 students in 1992 to
1,061 students in 1994. The district continued to address concerns of over-enrollment
and under-enrollment at the elementary schools. Another major challenge faced by the
district during Mrs. Buckner’s tenure as Superintendent was to create a balanced
enrollment pattern while maintaining an equitable learning environment for all students.
This would require more major changes to the district (Hamilton interview, p. 29).

On June 7, 1993 the board was notified of Mrs. Buckner’s retirement effective at
the end of the 1993-1994 school year. The board approved Mr. Berthard Mitchell, Jr. to
succeed Mrs. Buckner as the next Superintendent for School District 151. Board
President Mr. Boender also moved to appoint Mrs. Buckner as an advisor to the district
for the 1994-1995 school year. The motion was approved unanimously.14

**The Move to Attendance Centers**

Mrs. Buckner worked with her administrative team to find a way to meet the
challenge of balancing the enrollment patterns at the elementary schools without having
to move boundary lines. A plan was needed that would require community support and
allow for the maximization of available dollars and resources. Through the continued use
of advisory and strategic planning committees made up of parents, board members,
community members, staff and administration, the move to Grade Centers was brought
forth to the board. There was push-back from parents but not like the push-back
experienced with integration. The difference being that through the implementation of

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14South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes June 7, 1993.
the strategic planning process, ideas were brought forth with representatives of the community. This process contributed to the generation of broader perspectives rather than limited to the seven board members (Hamilton interview, pp. 31-32). Board Attorney John Canna once again contacted the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice requesting consideration to restructure the district’s schools into attendance centers stating:

…Due to demographic changes, the District is now faced with a real need to restructure its attendance centers to provide for the attendance of all Early Childhood, Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and First Graders at the Taft Primary Center; all Second and Third Graders at the Eisenhower School; all Fourth and Fifth Graders at the Madison School; and all Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grade students at the Coolidge Middle School. Restructuring of attendance centers in this manner will eliminate the need for boundary changes to balance enrollment, and thereby foster integration of the schools. It will also eliminate split classes and provide better access to support services and special programs for all students in the District. The District is not interested in a determination of “unitary” status, a general termination of the decree or even a relaxation of the reporting requirements at this time…

On May 11, 1994 District Judge John F. Grady approved the modification of the desegregation decree granting the change to attendance centers. Judge Grady also reduced the district’s reporting requirements beginning with the 1994-1995 school year and thereafter from two Status Reports per year to only one to be received within thirty days after the opening of school. On August 16, 1993 the South Holland School District 151 Board of Education approved the motion to change to attendance centers to

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begin with the 1994-1995 school year in order to “provide educational equity via equalized enrollment in all K-5 buildings…”\textsuperscript{17}

Mrs. Buckner retired at the end of the 1993-1994 school year as Superintendent and continued to serve the district in an advisory capacity. Mrs. Buckner’s advisory role served as a symbol of continuity and trust within the school community and was vital to the successful reorganization of the district’s schools into attendance centers. She was recognized by the board of education as an outstanding superintendent through the Illinois State Board of Education \textit{Those Who Excel} in January 1995. Mrs. Buckner had come full circle from her early years as a classroom teacher fighting for educational equity to leading the district in maintaining educational equity for all students. The board of education also changed through the years from a predominantly White board when Mrs. Buckner was hired in 1959 to a predominantly Black board in 1994 with representation from Harvey (Board Member Johnson), Phoenix (Board Members Broome and Roberts) and South Holland (Board Member Huntley). Mrs. Buckner continues to serve the district as a school board member elected in 2000 with over fifty-three years of service committed to providing the finest equitable education for all children of the district.

\textbf{Mr. Berthard Mitchell, Jr.}

Mr. Berthard Mitchell, Jr. was hired by South Holland School District 151 in September 1973 as a classroom teacher. He was appointed to serve as the Director of Chapter I before moving up to managing the finances and facilities as Assistant

\textsuperscript{17}South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes August 16, 1993.
Superintendent under Mrs. Buckner in 1990. Mr. Mitchell was approved by the board to serve as superintendent from July 1994 through October 1997 when he became ill. Mrs. Buckner was appointed to serve as interim Superintendent in November 1997. Mr. Mitchell did not recover from his illness and passed away December 5, 1997 (Hamilton interview, p. 72). There were no available records or news articles that highlighted Mr. Mitchell’s professional background or education prior to his coming to South Holland School District 151. A review of the board meeting minutes did not indicate any contentious meetings or controversial issues.

Establishment of Bilingual Education Program

Mr. Mitchell, the first African American male superintendent, was highly regarded and well respected by the staff and administration. Under his leadership the first bilingual education program that supported a growing Hispanic population within the school community was developed. He hired bilingual staff and instituted the Transitional Program of Instruction (TPI) for second language learners long before it was a requirement. He also focused on the technology needs of the district by purchasing more computers and establishing a computer lab at Coolidge Middle School (Hamilton interview, p. 7). Mrs. Buckner recalls Mr. Mitchell working for her as a teacher in the early 1970s and through the years they became very good friends. She referred to him as being very good with finances and secured grants for the district. She encouraged him to get his Chief Business Official endorsement which he completed. Mrs. Buckner was confident that he would do well succeeding her as Superintendent because he came from within and understood the needs of the district (Buckner interview, pp. 118-119).
Dr. Hamilton had a great deal of respect for Mr. Mitchell who he described as maintaining a “rationalist viewpoint” in opposition to his own. He described Mr. Mitchell as a very supportive administrator and knew he could count on him no matter the concern. There was one situation that involved a family member of Mr. Mitchell’s who worked for Dr. Hamilton in special education. A parent was upset over some comments allegedly made by the special education teacher that required action on the part of Dr. Hamilton. This became a potentially contentious situation, however, due to Mr. Mitchell’s professionalism, he supported the actions of Dr. Hamilton separating his personal feelings from his professional responsibilities (Hamilton interview, pp. 67-72).

During Mr. Mitchell’s tenure as Superintendent, respected Board Member Mr. Pershing Broome of Phoenix passed away in January 1995. Mr. Broome represented the Phoenix community on the school board after Mr. McGee stepped down in 1968. He was elected in 1969 and was honored by board resolution acknowledging his twenty-five years of service to the children of South Holland School District 151 which stated in part:

…Through the 25 years that followed, through good times and bad times, through periods of tranquility and periods of upheaval, he always kept a smile on his face and his mind focused on what was best for the children of our District…Board members would come and board members would go, but Pershing was always steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work and his dedication to the children of our district…

Mrs. Buckner served as interim Superintendent after Mr. Mitchell’s passing until Dr. Hamilton’s appointment as Superintendent in July 1998.

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18 South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, February 6, 1995.
Dr. Douglas C. Hamilton

Dr. Douglas C. Hamilton served as Superintendent for South Holland School District 151 from July 1998 through his retirement in June 2012 (see Figure 25). He received his Doctorate in Education in 2002 from Loyola University. Prior to his employment with District 151, Dr. Hamilton began his career as a special education classroom teacher for Chicago Public Schools. He moved on to run a day treatment and residential education department for St. Joseph’s Carondelet before serving as an administrator for the ECHO Joint Agreement PACE program. He was hired by Mrs. Buckner in July 1990 to serve as principal at Coolidge Middle School. Dr. Hamilton considered his appointment a risk taken by Mrs. Buckner because he was a White male hired to serve a Black student population in a school located within a Black community. Mrs. Buckner could have played it safe and looked for an African American administrator representative of the community. Dr. Hamilton’s respect for Mrs. Buckner would not allow him to be anything but successful in turning the junior high school into a middle school during his first year as principal (Hamilton interview, pp. 65-67).

Figure 25. Dr. Douglas C. Hamilton
During his tenure as Superintendent, Dr. Hamilton brought a new level of engagement to the communities that encompassed the district. One of the first noted changes implemented was the removal of the Dutch windmill emblem from district letterhead and replaced with the logo developed by Dr. Van Dam, *Where Young Minds Grow* with three children star gazing (see Figure 26). On September 8, 1998 the board approved for the first time since 1958 the district’s mission statement:

> It is the mission of South Holland School District 151, in collaboration with parents, communities and businesses, to be committed to education excellence by providing opportunities in a wholesome, nurturing environment; preparing all students to become life long learners and productive citizens, who can meet the challenges of society.\(^{19}\)

![School District 151 Emblems](image)

*Figure 26. School District 151 Emblems*

**Strategic Planning: Passage of Tax Referendum and Full Day Kindergarten**

South Holland School District 151 continued to face unfunded mandates, increased costs, and an aging infrastructure. The board recognized that the funds currently available or projected would not be enough to meet the district’s financial needs.

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\(^{19}\)South Holland School District 151 Board Meeting Minutes, September 8, 1998.
and programs would have to be eliminated. In 2002 Dr. Hamilton and the Board of Education embarked upon the development of the district’s first five-year strategic plan to assess their current situation in order to survive financially. This strategic plan would represent a starting point from which to grow and the committees were comprised of board members, administrators, parents, staff, and community members. The plan resulted in the successful passage of a referendum in 2003 that secured the financial health of the district allowing for the improvement of programs and facilities.\(^\text{20}\) The plan also called for the implementation of a full day kindergarten program to begin during the 2006-2007 school year. Dr. Hamilton commented that the success of the referendum was due to having people who lived in the district deliver the message to the community and not the people who are hired by the district (Hamilton interview, p. 42). The successful passage of this tax referendum was the first requested of the school community since the passage of the 1984 referendum under the leadership of Dr. Van Dam.

**The Move to a Balanced School Year**

In July 2006 the district began its second five-year strategic plan development that was presented to the board for approval in February 2007. The 2007-2012 plans addressed five areas for focus: Curriculum, Student Evaluation and Technology; Personnel and Staff Evaluation; Facilities; Finance; and Community Relations. The Curriculum, Student Evaluation and Technology provided the driving force for the district to continue to be innovative and consider a move to a balanced school year. This was based on articulation issues through grade levels and the high school, differentiating

\(^{20}\text{South Holland School District 151 Strategic Plan 2007-2012, board document, p. 12.}\)
instruction for students from the lowest learner to the gifted, and a need for greater integration of technology in the classroom. The problem then becomes how to fit all of this into the school day. This moved the discussion to focus on a longer school day and a balanced school year. According to Dr. Hamilton his role as superintendent was to provide information for individuals to think differently about what initiatives make sense in the best interest of students and the best interest of the various communities. A balanced school year would reduce the amount of time that students were off during the summer. He worked with the various groups to help them understand they were no longer an agrarian society that required students being off from school for twelve weeks. The district needed to develop a school calendar that provided for intercession periods to work with struggling learners and at the same time try to tie in available community resources. Dr. Hamilton contacted the park districts, libraries and day care centers from the different communities to come together to form a coalition to consider providing enrichment activities to fill in during the intercession periods of the balanced school year. The goal was to try and couple all of the resources together in a comprehensive way so that the district could really look at the balanced school year with intercession periods that are beneficial and enriching for students (Hamilton interview, pp. 16-19).

Dr. Hamilton recognized that moving to a balanced school year was a significant change and had to be approached slowly and methodically. Parents, community members, teachers and staff needed to understand what a balanced school year is and what traditional things will not change. Dr. Hamilton made it clear that no additional
days would be added to the school year and no one would lose Christmas vacation or Spring vacation. A balanced school year was simply the reorganization of school days. Dr. Hamilton and staff visited Track E schools in Chicago to record first-hand from administrators, teachers and parents what they liked about the balanced school year and some of its advantages. The district also employed a public relations person to be responsible for keeping the community informed about the District and the balanced school year at various functions. Dr. Hamilton worked with parent focus groups made up of representatives from the various communities to talk about the move to a balanced school year. These were thoughtful people who had children in the schools and were not afraid to speak up. Dr. Hamilton also welcomed people with divergent viewpoints who did not necessarily agree with what the district was doing. He worked towards changing their view by explaining or clarifying any misconceptions they may have had and presented the advantages of a balanced school year. Those same people usually turned out to be the best representatives for the district (Hamilton interview, pp. 35-41).

**Renovation of District Buildings**

Because of the previous strategic plan, the district was financially sound and through good board management was able to address the renovation needs of each district building. The renovations began during the 2009-2010 school year with the addition of classroom space; support facilities (gym, libraries, etc.) available for community use and partnerships; remodeled entrances for security including lighting, cameras and doors; off street bus pick-up and drop-off areas; and all buildings air conditioned. The renovations eliminated a major barrier to moving to a balanced school year (see Figures 27 to 31).
With the renovations almost completed and the community kept informed, the move to a balanced school year is scheduled to take place by the start of the 2013-2014 school year (Hamilton interview, pp. 35-41).

*Figure 27. Coolidge Middle School*

*Figure 28. Taft Elementary School*

*Figure 29. Madison Elementary School*
The Bara

The Barack Obama Learning Center

Dr. Van Dam wrote in his book *Who’s First on the Bus* that during early 1970s the children of Phoenix who attended Eisenhower, Madison and Roosevelt schools wanted to use the South Holland library for school assignments. The Phoenix students had library cards issued to them by the Harvey library which was located approximately one mile from their homes. The South Holland library was near the Roosevelt and Madison schools. When the Phoenix students attempted to check out books from the South Holland library using their Harvey library cards, they were refused even though the libraries throughout Cook County had a shared services policy. This limited the library’s use to the children of Phoenix. Mrs. Buckner and Dr. Van Dam tried unsuccessfully to secure a library construction grant to build a library in Phoenix. Through the years, Mrs. Buckner never stopped trying to get a library built for the Phoenix community. Dr. Hamilton and the District 151 Board of Education found a way to make this partnership happen. He helped to resolve the annexation issue that dated back to 1965 and was finally settled in 2011. The Barack Obama Learning Center was built as an addition to the
Coolidge-Kennedy School and represents a community partnership with the Phoenix Library Board, Village of Phoenix and School District 151 (see Figure 31).

Figure 31. Barack Obama Learning Center

Final Resolution of Court Order 68C755

On March 25, 2010 Judge John F. Grady found no reason to retain the case of the United States of America vs. South Holland School District 151, No. 68C755 and dismissed it. According to Dr. Hamilton, the release came as a result of the shifts in demographics. There were no differences between the racial groups White and Black because the number of White students had dramatically decreased. Hispanic students were always counted in the White enrollment figures until 2003 when a unilateral decision was made by Dr. Hamilton to create a separate enrollment category for Hispanic students (see Table 2). The impact of the new emerging Hispanic student population has
raised awareness for the need to provide open lines of communication between home and school.

The court ordered desegregation lawsuit taught many lessons including the need to hear the voices of all members of the school community. Dr. Hamilton recognized the importance for the district to be proactive in ensuring that the Hispanic group or any group does not become disenfranchised. The district has been vigilant about making sure they are welcoming families that enroll and their children have all the opportunities afforded them using the district’s available resources (Hamilton interview, p. 4).

Table 2. Student Demographics Reported to Government for 1968-2010

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Students</th>
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<th>% of White Students</th>
<th>% of Hispanic Students</th>
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<td>1490</td>
<td>1029</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>407 29.0</td>
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2010 Status Reports no longer required by the court.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Research Questions

Research Question 1

According to primary sources, how did the superintendents ground their decisions in the prevailing social, political, legal, and/or educational conditions of the time?

Dr. Charles Watts developed a district improvement plan that addressed the educational programs, finances, and efficient use of facilities based on the Survey Committee Report presented to the board at their February 27, 1967 meeting. He presented his findings to the board using technical-rational authority in providing the necessary data and research to address the district’s limited curricular offerings, lack of staff specialization for the upper grades, inefficient use of facilities, and inadequate funding. Dr. Watt’s recommended an increase in the tax rate in order to improve the educational programs and teaching staff. The first referendum passed successfully on October 21, 1967. However, the second referendum on December 9, 1967 did not.

According to court testimony, Dr. Watts recognized socially that the students and staff of Phoenix were isolated from the school community based on housing patterns with vacant farmland and railroad tracks separating them from the communities of South Holland and Harvey. He was also aware that this pattern of segregation existed well before his tenure as superintendent. Board actions that included the building of
neighborhood schools and attendance policies contributed to the segregation of the Phoenix students. Dr. Watts was also aware of the Survey Report’s recommendation of an integrated upper grade center so the effects of segregation would not deny children an equal opportunity to learn. He continued to use technical-rational authority by forming the School/Community Advisory Council made up of representatives of the school community to begin an integration study, policy development and action plan for the district in order to address the educational needs of the students (see Appendix G). Dr. Watts relied upon the evidence and best practices recommended in the Survey Report when presenting his action plan to the board on October 3, 1967. Based on the committee’s findings he proposed a move to an upper grade center, later known as Plan C that would maximize the learning environment and resources for the district’s 7th and 8th grade students.

The board assigned Dr. Watts to attend an Administrative Leadership Institute where he shared his views regarding his school community’s feelings toward integration. However, his comments were used against him as a tape was obtained under false pretenses wherein he referred to many of the South Holland residents as “Chicago Grasshoppers” running from the black plague. Dr. Watts chose to confront this controversy openly demonstrating his use of moral authority at the November 27, 1967 board meeting. He stated that the content of the tape was a personal report presented to a working institute involving schools who had integration problems. Dr. Watts did not hesitate to tell the community that an integration problem existed and of the total student enrollment, 30 percent were Negro students and they were not to be ignored.
The board received notification on April 25, 1968 of their violation of Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution in the allocation of staff and students and had until May 15, 1968 to come up with a plan to correct the violations. Dr. Watts demonstrated moral authority by vehemently opposing the board’s action of excluding him from the April 29, 1968 special board meeting to discuss the lawsuit in which he was identified as a defendant. He continued to provide the board recommendations that would place the district in compliance with the Justice Department’s directives. According to the May 6, 1968 board minutes, the board’s legal counsel Mr. John Van Der Aa advised the board not to hear Dr. Watts’ recommendations. Dr. Watts remarked that Mr. Van Der Aa was placing a derogatory reflection on the administration, the board and the community and that his decision to provide the recommendations hinged on what was best for the education of the youngsters and the U.S. Constitution.

Dr. Watt’s final decision to resign voluntarily from the district was grounded in his commitment to his sense of duty and obligation, based on moral authority, to bring to the public’s attention the need for a Board of Education that was committed to basic principles of governance and educational purposes rather than capricious political considerations and pressures. He also included a copy of his resignation letter (Appendix H) in the first required Status Report submitted to Judge Hoffman dated August 16, 1968 without the knowledge of the board’s attorney.

Dr. Thomas Van Dam began his tenure facing a hostile community environment over the loss of local control of their schools. Dr. Van Dam firmly believed a good
school program would solve many of the district’s problems and would ground his decisions in this belief.

His first board meeting at Eisenhower School on August 30, 1968 was attended by hundreds of Black and White adults and children sitting on separate sides of the gym while police were present to keep order. Dr. Van Dam made the decision based on the social environment to ban parents and reporters from school grounds for the first two weeks of school due to the court ordered integration. His reliance on direct orders and mandates demonstrate Dr. Van Dam’s bureaucratic authority as he reassured the community that school would open in an orderly and controlled manner and the safety of all children was his first priority.

The politically connected Neighborhood Schools Committee (NSC) continued to host meetings that drew hundreds of people to protest the court ordered integration. This included many of the local and state politicians who were quick to grandstand. Dr. Van Dam worked to calm the waters within the community using psychological authority requesting that the school community try to work together to support the schools while the court order was being fought in court. He attended many of the NSC and other community meetings in order to move the focus to improving the school programs. Dr. Van Dam would admonish any reporter that would take his statements out of context and further incite feelings of discontent within the South Holland community.

The number of White students continued to decline within the district and Dr. Van Dam reported to the board the loss of state aid due to the decreasing enrollment. The board was in conflict over accepting federal Title funds; however, Dr. Van Dam, based
on psychological authority, urged the board to accept the funds in order to provide for additional support staff and improvement of programs at Coolidge School. The NSC held rallies to protest the potential acceptance of federal funds at the “Occupied SD 151” meeting. When the board was leaning towards not accepting the Title funds, Dr. Van Dam, through moral authority, challenged them to leave the decision to their consciences if they did not approve the funds. The board moved to approve the application for Title funds by a 5 to 2 vote.

Dr. Van Dam informed the board of his concerns regarding the leadership of the principal at Coolidge School. The board was concerned that moving a Black principal and replacing him with a White principal might lead to more community distress especially since the permanent injunction hearings were taking place. Dr. Van Dam made the decision, based on professional authority, to remove the principal in the best interest of the students and reminded the board he was hired to administer the schools and was not concerned about integration as much as he was deeply concerned about the school program.

Dr. Van Dam continued to believe that a solid educational program would encourage families to support the district. He decided, based on bureaucratic authority, to continue to hire experienced teachers. He also increased curricular materials, required lesson plans be submitted each week, required monthly instructional reports from administrators, issued a monthly newsletter and formed Title committees to submit proposals. A suggestion was made to bring back the Community Advisory Committee;
however, Dr. Van Dam felt such a committee would be beneficial only when the community’s understanding of the district was achieved.

Dr. Van Dam continued to look for available funding due to the loss of state funding as a result of the declining enrollment under the court ordered desegregation. Based on technical-rational authority, Dr. Van Dam decided to meet with State Senator Charles Claybough who was the chair of the Illinois Problems Commission and brought along the Township Treasurer and Board Member Kmiec to address the district’s need for funds. The Senator expressed his sympathies to the township treasurer but stated he had absolutely no sympathy for the community because of their stubbornness over the welfare of the children.

Dr. Van Dam contacted the mayors of South Holland, Harvey and Phoenix on the advice of Ray Page, Superintendent of Public Instruction, hoping to secure some financial assistance through the state income tax revenue the cities collected. Dr. Van Dam stated that the school district was in dire need of funds and might soon face dissolution by the State. He was unsuccessful in his use of psychological authority since the South Holland and Harvey Mayors felt the school district collected enough money from the taxpayers. Dr. Van Dam did not hear from the Phoenix Mayor.

The legal fight over the court ordered desegregation came to an end in May 1971 when the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the district’s case. The district’s enrollment dropped to 1,862 students in 1971 from 2,564 students in 1968. Phoenix Board Member L.K. Watkins expressed hope that the community would come together. He commented on the misperceptions by White residents who believed they were being
asked to pay for busing and Black residents who believed they were being asked to pay for legal fees to fight the court order; which resulted in a lack of support for the schools. Dr. Van Dam, using professional and moral authorities, decided to ask the local newspapers to help publicize the quality of the educational programs in School District 151. He challenged the community to support the school district with hopes of bringing back students who left to attend private schools.

Dr. Van Dam’s continued insistence, based on professional authority, in maintaining a high quality educational program helped him to secure the cooperation of the board, administrators and PTA members in joining the North Central Association regional school accreditation. Their feasibility study indicated no evidence of the usual problems associated with desegregated schools. There was a very mature and matter of fact relationship between teachers, students, and administrators. South Holland School District 151 kept racial tensions out of the classrooms.

Dr. Van Dam never gave up trying to pass a referendum at least fifteen times (15) over seventeen (17) years in order to improve the district’s programs, provide quality teachers and improve facilities. He was able to convince the voters through the use of psychological authority to pass a tax rate referendum on March 20, 1984 using the help of district students marching in a parade carrying signs and assigning the district’s band to play at the Holland Home for Senior Citizens.

Dr. Janice Potter’s tenure was relatively quiet as the board minutes did not reflect any contentious meetings or major controversies. The communities of South Holland, Harvey, Thornton, and Phoenix were relatively quiet after the tumultuous years
following the desegregation order. However, by 1987 the South Holland School District 151 enrollment was at an all-time low of 981 students comprised of 545 African American students and 436 White students.

There were few major educational decisions highlighted within the board meeting minutes over the two year period that Dr. Potter served as superintendent. Using bureaucratic and technical-rational sources of authority, Dr. Potter implemented several new organizational practices that sought to centralize duties that were once performed by the administrators. Dr. Potter also worked to prevent delays in the ordering of materials and supplies in preparation for the opening of schools by securing the board’s authorization to approve textbook and supply orders not to exceed a set dollar amount.

Dr. Potter’s decision to recommend the continuation of the pre-kindergarten program and the summer school program was based on technical-rational authority and the availability of grant dollars. She was also directed by the board to review several parent concerns related to the fourth grade classroom at Madison School and the third grade classroom at Taft School where each class contained 34 students. Dr. Potter recommended that the classes be split to accommodate smaller sizes based on providing an environment more conducive to learning. Her use of technical-rational authority moved the board to approve her recommendations.

Dr. Potter improved the educational programs for students by securing board approval to purchase reading, math, and social studies textbooks. She also implemented drug education for grades 5 and 6 and AIDS education for grade 6.
Mrs. Jessica Buckner was faced with several major and potentially contentious decisions that through her leadership laid the groundwork for future improvements to the district.

In 1972 the board took action, following court approval, to close two schools in the district due to declining enrollments: Roosevelt School in South Holland and Kennedy School in Phoenix. This action resulted in the 6th grade students being removed from Kennedy School and returned to their neighborhood schools. The community of Phoenix was divided into thirds when determining the attendance area of the K-6 students. Over time this resulted in the over-enrollment at the elementary schools and the idea of moving the district’s 6th grade students to Coolidge School in Phoenix was raised. Mrs. Buckner was aware that a move like this could become contentious if there was no available input from the school community. Using technical-rational and professional sources of authority, Mrs. Buckner worked with the district’s Advisory Committee and Strategic Planning. A committee recommendation was made to move the 6th grade students to the Coolidge Upper Grade Center. The district needed to request a modification of the court order from the Justice Department which was approved as the move did not impede desegregation. The move was in place for the start of the 1991-1992 school year and allowed for more room at each of the elementary schools.

According to Mrs. Buckner, the Phoenix community had grown to believe over time that they were very much a part of the educational system in the south suburbs and School District 151 and wanted the best person to lead Coolidge School. Mrs. Buckner served in a dual role as both the Principal of Coolidge School during the 1989-90 school
During that first year Mrs. Buckner made clear her directives to the administrative staff using a bureaucratic approach to leadership. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, African American families moved into South Holland, Harvey, and Phoenix. Those families had traditionally attended public schools and therefore were enrolling in School District 151. To alleviate over enrollment at the K-6 buildings and with the available space capacity at Coolidge, Mrs. Buckner and the board of education, with the approval of the court, decided to move the 6th graders in the fall of 1991 to Coolidge. Mrs. Buckner and the board of education knew that they needed a full time principal to facilitate the transition from a junior high to a true middle school. Dr. Hamilton worked for the ECHO Joint Agreement located in the Coolidge School building. Her decision, grounded in professional authority, to hire Dr. Hamilton as the Principal of Coolidge School was based on her first-hand knowledge of his organizational and communication skills as well as his understanding of the Phoenix community’s needs. Mrs. Buckner felt Dr. Hamilton’s tenure at Coolidge was long enough to recognize the changes the school went through and found him to be the best person for the job (Buckner interview, pp. 88-89).

Mrs. Buckner continued to address the issue of over-enrollment and under-enrollment at the three elementary schools. She needed to find a way to maximize available dollars and resources while balancing the racial make-up of the elementary schools. The district’s enrollment during the 1993-1994 school year was 1,058 students comprised of 68% African American and 32% White (see Table 2). The demographic changes that took place within the communities of South Holland and Harvey made it
difficult to change boundary lines to balance the racial composition of each elementary school. Mrs. Buckner kept her board informed every step of the way using technical-rational, professional and moral sources of authority. The district was faced with a real need to restructure the schools into attendance centers. Mrs. Buckner recognized that community support would be needed for this change to be successful. Through the use of the district’s Advisory Committee and Strategic Planning Committee, the move to attendance centers was brought forth to the board for approval. There was push-back from parents but not like the push-back experienced with integration.

The move to attendance centers would not be instituted until after Mrs. Buckner’s retirement at the start of the 1994-1995 school year. This gave Mrs. Buckner a full year prior to her retirement to continue advocating, through professional and moral sources of authority, the positive outcomes and benefits the students would receive with attendance centers in place. This also allowed a sufficient time period to continue planning to ensure a smooth transition. She believed this move to attendance centers would provide educational equity through equalized enrollment in all K-5 buildings. Mrs. Buckner continued to work in the capacity of district consultant after her retirement. She decided to stay on so that she would be the one to take the impact of this decision; allowing the next superintendent to focus on the needs of the students and the district.

Mr. Berthard Mitchell, Jr. was appointed to succeed Mrs. Buckner as superintendent. He had served as a classroom teacher, Director of Chapter I and Assistant Superintendent prior to his appointment as superintendent. The district’s
enrollment continued to slowly climb to 1,061 students in 1994 from 1,019 students in 1989.

During Mr. Mitchell’s tenure he put in place the district’s first formal bilingual education program to meet the needs of a growing Hispanic population. He recognized, based on professional and moral sources of authority, the need to provide services to the Hispanic population avoiding potential marginalization of the group. Mr. Mitchell brought in bilingual staff and began a Transitional Program of Instruction for second language learners before it became a requirement.

As the use of the internet grew during the 1990s, Mr. Mitchell sought to improve the integration of technology within the district. Through the pursuit of state and federal grants, he purchased computers for each building throughout the district and established a computer lab at Coolidge Middle School.

Dr. Douglas C. Hamilton’s tenure saw an increase in the district’s enrollment to 1,490 students in 2009 from 1,176 students in 1997. Dr. Hamilton was well aware of the history of the desegregation of School District 151 and the impact it had on the culture of the school community. The increase in the Hispanic student population was not a concern as the district was more open to change due to their past experiences which helped them become prepared for the future.

The researcher noted the removal of the Dutch windmill emblem from district letterhead which was replaced with the logo developed by Dr. Van Dam, Where Young Minds Grow with three children star gazing. The Status Reports submitted to the federal government displayed the Dutch windmill emblem on their letterhead from 1968 through
1997. Dr. Hamilton’s first Status Report displayed the Where Young Minds Grow emblem. This change, based on moral authority, served to promote the image of the district as being all inclusive as opposed to the Dutch windmill representing only one group of people.

In 2002 the South Holland School District 151 continued to face unfunded mandates, increased costs and aging infrastructures. Dr. Hamilton recognized the funds currently available or projected would not be enough to meet the district’s financial needs. Eventually programs would have to be cut. He kept his board informed based on technical-rational authority. Dr. Hamilton, using professional authority, facilitated a Strategic Planning Committee that would develop a five year plan to assess the district’s current situation in order to survive financially. Using psychological authority, careful consideration was given to securing the right people on the committee to represent the district when discussing the strategic plan with members of the community as well as local politicians. Dr. Hamilton’s decision to bring a strategic planning committee together resulted in the successful passage of a tax referendum in 2003 and implementation of a full day kindergarten program in 2006.

Dr. Hamilton facilitated a second five-year Strategic Plan that began in 2007. Five areas were evaluated: curriculum, student evaluation and technology; personnel and staff evaluation; facilities; finance; and community relations. The Curriculum, Student Evaluation and Technology Committee provided the impetus for the district to continue to be innovative and consider a move to a balanced school year. Dr. Hamilton’s sources of authority included professional and moral as he provided information for individuals to
think differently about what initiatives made sense in the best interest of students and the best interest of the various communities.

Dr. Hamilton’s decision to guide the Strategic Planning Committee in moving slowly and methodically, through the use of technical-rational authority, helped the school staff and members of the public understand the balanced school model. He worked, using professional and moral authorities, to build a trusting relationship with the various communities; reassuring people of the educational advantages of a balanced school year.

Dr. Hamilton and staff members visited Chicago’s Track E Public Schools to record first-hand testimonials from administrators, teachers and parents regarding what they liked about the balanced school year and its advantages. This information was used by Dr. Hamilton, based on professional authority, to keep the public informed about the balanced school year. Dr. Hamilton worked with parent focus groups, made up of representatives from the various communities, to talk about the move to a balanced school year. He also employed a public relations person to be responsible for keeping the community informed about the district and the balanced school year at various district, community and political functions.

Dr. Hamilton did not avoid persons who had divergent views regarding the move to a balanced school year. He welcomed dissenters and took the time to answer their questions or clarify any misconceptions while presenting the advantages of a balanced school year. This use of professional and moral sources of authority led those same people to become some of the best advocates for the district.
As the balanced school year plan progressed, it was necessary to create a school calendar that provided for intercession periods to work with struggling learners and at the same time try to tie in available community resources. Dr. Hamilton’s use of professional and moral sources of authority guided the planning process in trying to couple all of the resources together in a comprehensive way so that the balanced school year included intercession periods that were beneficial and enriching for students.

Through good fiscal management of funds, the district was financially sound and able to address the renovation needs of each district building. Renovations began in 2009 with the addition of classroom space; support facilities available for community use; remodeled entrances for security; off street bus pick-up and drop-off areas; and all buildings were air-conditioned. Dr. Hamilton’s use of technical-rational and professional sources of authority led to the removal of a major barrier to moving to a balanced school year by ensuring that these renovations took place with board support.

The Barack Obama Learning Center was built in response to a community need for a public library. As early as the 1970s, Mrs. Buckner and Dr. Van Dam tried unsuccessfully to secure a library construction grant to build a library in the community of Phoenix. The Phoenix children who attended South Holland schools were unable to check out books and materials at the South Holland library with their Harvey Public Library cards. They were refused even though libraries throughout Cook County had a shared services policy. Through the years, Mrs. Buckner never gave up trying to get a library built in Phoenix. Dr. Hamilton helped to facilitate the partnership between the Phoenix Library Board, Village of Phoenix and School District 151 in the construction of
the Barack Obama Learning Center library. This use of moral authority led to the library being built as an addition to the Coolidge-Kennedy School and was completed in August 2012.

As the White student population decreased dramatically over the years there were no differences between the White and Black racial groups. Hispanic students were always counted as White for the purpose of the Status Reports submitted to the federal government. In 2003, Dr. Hamilton, applying professional and moral sources of authority, made a unilateral decision to create a separate enrollment category for Hispanic students. He believed this student population should be separately noted and supported based on their identified needs. Judge John F. Grady dismissed the case of the United States of America vs. South Holland School District 151, No. 68C755 on March 25, 2010 due to the reported demographics and no further action by the Justice Department.

**Research Question 2**

According to primary sources, how did each superintendent bring to the board an awareness of the prevailing social, political, legal and/or educational conditions of the time as the rationale for the need to develop policy and/or make decisions?

**Dr. Watts** used a direct approach in addressing his board and the public. He implemented the use of a School Community Advisory Council as a means of including staff and community in the decision making process. His relationship with the board began on a positive note then slowly became more contentious as the board continued to be influenced by the NSC in their legal fight against the court order.
Dr. Watts addressed the board regarding the district’s finances after commending them for completing the Survey Committee Report. Using technical-rational source of authority he provided data to the board indicating that District 151 was in the low 25% of the 119 school districts in Cook County and recommended a tax rate referendum. The board moved to approve a referendum based on Dr. Watts’ recommendation which proved to be successful.

Dr. Watts prepared for the position of superintendent by becoming familiar with the Survey Committee Report written at the direction of the Board of Education. The report focused on the effects of segregation and provided recommendations for an integrated upper grade center that would not deny children an equal opportunity to learn. Dr. Watts was directed by the board to attend a workshop on integration to assist in planning for the district. He kept the board informed by preparing an activity report (see Appendix G) based on his attendance at the Institute for Administrative Leadership providing a timeline to guide the district in the implementation of a central junior high program in September 1968. His use of technical-rational, professional and moral sources of authority guided the School Community Advisory Council in the development of the activity report.

Dr. Watts raised the ire of several board members regarding comments he made at the Institute for Administrative Leadership that were taken out of context and used against him. The comments were related to school districts experiencing difficulty with integration and he expressed them based on moral authority. Board President Mr. Bogolub commented that he believed in neighborhood schools; however, segregated
education is not equal education and the country cannot physically or morally endure without integration. The statements expressed by Mr. Bogolub moved Board Member Mr. Richard Graf to motion that the board include in their policy that they support the neighborhood schools policy; they operate under the neighborhood schools policy; and that the neighborhood school policy be included in board policy. The motion passed 6 to 1 with Phoenix Board Member Mr. McGee voting no.

Dr. Watts worked with the School Community Advisory Council to review the overcrowded classrooms at Eisenhower and Madison Schools and the concerns raised by the Survey Committee Report. The School Community Advisory Council recommended to the board a centrally located upper grade center. The recommendations were guided by Dr. Watts’ leadership based on technical-rational, professional and moral sources of authority. Dr. Watts presented several alternatives to the board that would address the district’s issues including a plan that supported an upper grade center. The board decided to form a budget advisory committee to address the district’s funding concerns related to the presented alternatives and increased transportation costs.

Dr. Watts’ use of professional and moral sources of authority guided his decision to provide positive feedback to the staff, board members, and community members through memos focused on board unity, community harmony and a fresh approach to the future. Board Member Mr. Graf moved to dissolve the district’s association with the Institute for Administrative Leadership whose stated purpose was to provide guidance in moving towards an integrated school community. The motion passed with Phoenix Board Member Mr. McGee voting no.
Dr. Watts was informed by Assistant Attorney General Stephen Pollock that student assignment and school construction was in violation of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* and the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. At the June 17, 1968 board meeting, Dr. Watts cautioned the board that the district would probably receive a prohibitive injunction within forty-eight hours if relocate-able classrooms were ordered for Eisenhower School since no building activity was allowed to take place as long as the court action was in progress. Once again he demonstrated his use of moral authority in seeking to provide guidance to the board. The board took no action at that meeting and chose to wait until they heard from their attorney.

Dr. Watts submitted his voluntary letter of resignation which he read openly to the school board and audience members criticizing five members of the board for making decisions based on capricious political considerations and community pressures. His letter reflected professional and moral sources of authority. When the vote was taken to accept Dr. Watts’ resignation, only two board members, African American board member Mr. McGee and White board member Mr. Davis voted no.

**Dr. Thomas Van Dam** brought awareness to the board of the prevailing social, political, legal, and/or educational conditions of the time through direct discussions with Board President Louis Wiersma and working with the different board committees on various aspects of the district.

The Neighborhood Schools Committee was pressuring the board to not accept federal money for fear the government would have more control over their district. Dr. Van Dam, based on psychological authority, placed the onus on the board for not
approving the acceptance of federal Title money that was needed for school programs if
the appeal was rejected. The board approved the application for Title funds with a 5 to 2
vote.

Dr. Van Dam continued to promote the need for more funds to improve the
educational programs within the district. He requested that the board consider proposing
a tax referendum to be held on December 14, 1968. The board voted to hold the
referendum only to have it fail; a pattern that would follow for the next sixteen (16) years.

The principal at Coolidge School was to be replaced and transferred to
Coordinator of Title Programs with no loss in pay. Dr. Van Dam made the board aware,
through the use of professional authority, of previous problems and the need for change
based on what would be in the best interest of the children and the principal. The U.S.
District Attorney filed a petition with Judge Hoffman asking him to order Dr. Van Dam
to reinstate the principal. Dr. Van Dam sent a letter to Judge Hoffman along with his
notes regarding the principal and asked to be allowed to make educational administrative
decisions without the court’s interference. The decision to transfer the Coolidge principal
to Coordinator of Title Programs was upheld by the board and a motion to release the
administrator at the end of the 1968-1969 school year was approved.

Dr. Van Dam requested that the board approve a teacher training program, paid
for with federal desegregation funds, which would offer support to teachers in learning to
deal with racial tensions. Board Member Richard Graf stated he would never vote to
accept help to integrate the district while the board was still in the process of appealing
their case. Phoenix Board Member Pershing Broome supported the offered training. Dr. Van Dam, upset by some of the board’s negative comments, demonstrated moral source of authority by making it clear to the board that he was trying to do something about preparing his teachers for next fall and wanted a solid program in place. The board approved acceptance of the federal funds at the June 2, 1969 board meeting.

**Dr. Janice Potter** – There is no detailed information available, according to primary source documents, which would indicate a specific means of bringing awareness to the board that would cause them to develop policy or make decisions. The board minutes from 1956 through 1987 reflected extensive details in relation to board discussions. However, with Dr. Potter’s arrival the board minutes became less detailed regarding board discussions and were limited to general topics, motions brought forth and decisions made.

Board President Mr. Lanting moved to authorize Dr. Potter to become trained in the Strategic Planning Model; however, there is no record indicating her request for such training or plans for implementation of this model. Dr. Potter submitted a letter of resignation after her first year which she withdrew after a board discussion. There is no indication as to the reason why this occurred. Dr. Potter presented to the board new textbooks and curriculums which the board approved. She retired from her position on July 6, 1989.

**Mrs. Jessica Buckner** – According to Mrs. Buckner, she would bring awareness to the board of prevailing social, political, legal, and/or educational conditions through her working relationship with the Board President Gary Boender during her tenure as
Superintendent. She did not attempt to cultivate seven (7) individual relationships but made sure she kept the board informed of all major occurrences within the district. Mrs. Buckner also used the School Community Advisory Committee and Strategic Planning Committee to present information to the board to support decision making or develop policy.

The 1972 court decision to allow the closing of Kennedy and Roosevelt Schools over time resulted in the over-enrollment at the elementary schools. The idea of moving the district’s 6th grade students to Coolidge School in Phoenix was raised. Mrs. Buckner, through the use of professional and moral sources of authority, worked with Dr. Hamilton and the district’s Advisory and Strategic Planning Committees who supported the move of the 6th grade students to the Coolidge Upper Grade Center. Their recommendations were presented to the board for consideration. The district also requested a modification of the court order from the Justice Department, which they received, based on Mrs. Buckner’s technical-rational authority of providing data to prove the move did not impede desegregation. The board approved the action and the move was in place for the start of the 1991-1992 school year. This allowed for more room at each of the elementary schools.

Mrs. Buckner continued to address the issue of over-enrollment and under-enrollment at the three elementary schools. The district was faced with the need to restructure the schools into attendance centers which would maximize the district’s resources and provide equity to all three elementary buildings. Mrs. Buckner recognized that community support would again be needed for this change to be successful. Her
leadership, based on technical-rational, professional and moral sources of authority, once again contributed to a positive process for change. Through the use of the Community Advisory Committee and Strategic Planning Committee the move to attendance centers was brought forth to the board for consideration. The district also requested a modification of the court order from the Justice Department which they received. The board approved the move to attendance centers to take place during the 1994-1995 school year. The board faced push-back from parents but not to the extent experienced during desegregation.

**Mr. Berthard Mitchell Jr.** – There is no detailed information available, according to primary source documents, which would indicate a specific means of bringing awareness to the board that would cause them to develop policy or make decisions. Mrs. Buckner and Dr. Hamilton both shared their respect for Mr. Mitchell’s leadership and commitment to the students, families and staff of the district. They both perceived Mr. Mitchell’s leadership to be based on professional and moral sources of authority as he was prepared to address the needs of the growing Hispanic population within the district. The August 21, 1995 board minutes reflect an extension of Mr. Mitchell’s contract for three additional years with full board approval. The September 9, 1995 board minutes reflect a scheduled meeting with the Citizens Advisory Committee which may indicate Mr. Mitchell’s approach to providing the board recommendations for decisions or policy development.

**Dr. Douglas C. Hamilton** – According to Dr. Hamilton, he would bring awareness to the board of prevailing social, political, legal, and/or educational conditions
through his working relationship with the board president. He also used the School Community Advisory and Strategic Planning Committees to present information to the board to support decision making or develop policy. The information provided by Dr. Hamilton was based on technical-rational, professional and moral sources of authority. The district also employed a community/public relations person to keep the community informed of the district’s plans and activities. All of this information is given to the board as a means of keeping them informed.

The first first-year Strategic Plan, which began in 2002, resulted in the successful passage of a tax referendum in 2003 under the leadership of Dr. Hamilton. This was the first referendum to pass since Dr. Van Dam in 1984. In 2006 the district implemented a full day kindergarten program.

Dr. Hamilton worked with the Strategic Planning Committee to develop the next five (5) year plan to cover the period 2007-2012. The Strategic Planning Committee generated ideas from representatives of the community based on five areas of focus which resulted in the recommendation to move to a balanced school year. Dr. Hamilton’s method of applying the Strategic Planning Model, based on technical-rational, professional and moral sources of authority, provided a much broader perspective based on community input to assist the board in the decision making process. Dr. Hamilton addressed the removal of barriers in the implementation of a balanced school year. With board approval in place he addressed the necessary building renovations, and community and staff concerns.
Research Question 3

According to primary sources, in what ways did the board’s decisions, actions taken, and resulting changes contribute to a new context for each succeeding superintendent to operate within?

According to primary source documents the decisions made and actions taken by the South Holland School District 151 Board of Education had the greatest impact upon the communities of Phoenix, South Holland and Harvey during the period between 1956 and 1966 at the time Mr. George Kingsland was superintendent. In 1956 the board consisted of Board Members DeGraff, DeYoung, Jacob, Owen, Tromp, Gowens and Harper. It was not until 1962 that Phoenix Board Member L. K. Watkins was elected to serve with Board Members Ravesloot, Ridenour, Norris, Scholl, Robinson and Tromp.

The following board actions contributed to an environment of mistrust and hostility prior to Dr. Watts’ arrival:

As early as February 4, 1956 the board of education failed to address the unequal treatment of the Phoenix students attending Coolidge School in the areas of over enrollment, used books from Roosevelt School, and harsh punishment directed at Black students by White teachers.

In September 1956, the Roosevelt School staff prevented four African American parents from Phoenix from enrolling their children due to the overcrowded conditions at Coolidge School. They were told that assigned attendance areas prevented them from attending Roosevelt School. The parents were unaware that such a policy existed. The
board of education did not enact such a policy prior to a resolution adopted on October 5, 1964.

The Board of Education allowed White students who lived closer to Coolidge School to be transported by bus to Roosevelt School during 1956-1957 and continuing through 1967-1968 school years. The attendance of these children at the Roosevelt School instead of the Coolidge School was not justified by any safety factor.

The Board of Education failed to consider that in June 1963 the Illinois State Legislature passed the Armstrong Act which forbids school construction or purchase of buildings which promote segregation and called for action to prevent de facto segregation and eliminate racial separation in public schools.

In December 1964 the board of education considered possible locations for the construction of new facilities to address the overflow of students from Phoenix. Board Member L.K. Watkins suggested a site in South Holland to serve as a central location. The opinion of the majority of the board was that voters would not support a referendum for a school which would be integrated. The board did not accept the site proposed by Mr. Watkins.

During the summer of June 1965 the board of education issued a written statement asking citizens of Phoenix to help reduce the incidents of vandalism at Coolidge School by keeping their children off school grounds during the summer. Any activities properly supervised by adults could be conducted on school grounds provided requests were submitted to and approved by the school board. This board action contributed to the Phoenix community’s feelings of oppression and hostility.
The board of education approved the building of the Kennedy School adjacent to Coolidge School in Phoenix and the Taft School in Harvey following the neighborhood schools policy. This board action promoted and preserved the racial segregation of students in School District 151.

The board of education adopted a second resolution on September 9, 1966 regarding attendance zone boundaries after the opening of the Taft and Kennedy Schools. This action further promoted and preserved the racial segregation of students in School District 151.

**Dr. Charles Watts** – The preceding actions by the Board of Education made it important for Dr. Watts to begin work on the concerns raised by the Survey Committee Report through the formation of the School Community Advisory Council and an Integration Study Committee. During his tenure, Board Members Graf, Gouwens, McGee, Weier, Wiersma, Bogolub and Davis served on the board in 1967. However Board Members McGee and Bogolub lost the April 1968 election to Hendrix and Bennett who were NSC candidates. Following the election, Board Members Gouwens and Weier resigned from the board. The Board appointed Mr. McGee and Mr. Krillic to the positions. The following board actions contributed to the continued environment of mistrust and hostility:

Board Member Mr. Graf advised Dr. Watts of his thoughts in writing regarding integration and busing; stating he saw no reason for it. Mr. Graf’s letter was used as evidence during court testimony (see Appendix H).
The board of education chose not to accept Dr. Watts’ recommendation of program alternatives that addressed the Survey Committee Report recommendations.

The board of education supported the Neighborhood Schools Committee who wielded political influence over local politicians and promoted segregation within the South Holland community.

The School Community Advisory Council prepared a written statement in support of an upper grade center. The Board of Education President Mr. Bogolub requested that an opinion poll be conducted during the April 13, 1968 board elections to determine the percentage of the population in favor of an upper grade center. Instead of moving forward with a decision, the board chose to cede to the wishes of the South Holland and Harvey communities.

The Board of Education met July I, 1968 to approve the district’s appeal of Judge Hoffman’s court order and petition the court for a stay of the order. Board Member Mr. McGee asked that the board consider the cost involved in the appeal. The motion passed 5 to 2 with Mr. McGee and Mr. Davis voting no.

According to Dr. Watts’ resignation letter, he commented on the loss of confidence by a majority of the board in him as exhibited by their actions in following the unsuccessful advice of their attorney instead of their superintendent.

Dr. Van Dam was faced with the challenge of bringing the school community together. He worked to change the focus to providing a solid program of education from the conflict of integration. The board of education continued to support the Neighborhood Schools Committee while offering no reassuring words to offset the
negative sentiments expressed throughout the community regarding integration. The board members who served in 1968 include Davis, Graf, McGee, Krillic, Wiersma, Bennett and Hendrix. In September 1968 Mr. McGee resigned out of frustration with the board and was replaced by Mr. Zeilenga. This was the only time since before 1962 that the Board of Education consisted of White members only. During the 1969 board election both NSC candidates Hendrix and Bennett were defeated and Zeilenga was re-elected along with new Board Member Pershing Broome. The following board actions continued to contribute to an environment of mistrust and hostility:

The board of education, at their September 8, 1968 meeting, refused to submit the by-laws of the Better Education, Inc. group to the court as an alternate viewpoint of the community. The Better Education, Inc. group supported the move to desegregate the district. Phoenix Board Member Mr. McGee commented that anything representing the opinion of the board had been sent to the court, but the board was reluctant to air the views of people who disagreed with them. Mr. McGee submitted his letter of resignation because he did not care to serve on the board until such time that the board decided to concern themselves with the education of all students in the district.

At the November 4, 1968 board meeting a motion was made by Mr. Johnson to direct the superintendent to prepare a plan to revert the district back to its neighborhood schools pending the outcome of the Appeals Court. The motion was approved and the appeal was denied December 17, 1968.

The board of education made the decision at their May 19, 1969 board meeting to take to their case to the U.S. Court of Appeals following Judge Hoffman’s permanent
injunction ruling against the district on May 15, 1969. This was despite having spent over $50,000 in legal fees while Dr. Van Dam continued to find ways to secure funds to improve the school programs within the district.

The U.S. Court of Appeals decided in September 1970 to uphold Judge Hoffman’s desegregation order. Judge Hoffman’s court order allowed busing for K-2 Phoenix children to be a matter of choice. The board’s attorney believed this weakened the Justice Department’s position on total integration thus forcing the board to take their case to the U. S. Supreme Court and a brief was filed on December 6, 1970. On May 31, 1971 the school district was notified that the U.S. Supreme Court would not hear their case; upholding the lower court’s decision.

The decline in enrollment, the loss in state aid and the continued lack of financial support by the school community moved the board to consider closing several schools within the district. On August 7, 1972 Judge Hoffman announced his decision to close Roosevelt School in South Holland and Kennedy School in Phoenix.

Dr. Van Dam continued to keep the focus on the school programs and tried to pass a referendum to generate funds for the district. By 1978 the board of education approved plans to renovate Coolidge School into a modern upper grade center complete with gym and shower facilities, library, band room, vocal music room, art classroom, home economics room, and expanded science facilities. The renovations were completed by September 1979.

Dr. Van Dam was successful in passing a tax referendum on March 20, 1984. There was very little information regarding the Neighborhoods Schools Committee after
1979 and the board minutes reflected less contentious meetings. Dr. Van Dam had succeeded in “calming the waters.”

**Dr. Potter’s** tenure over the two year period was very quiet. There were no board decisions or actions noted that contributed to a negative environment.

**Mrs. Jessica Buckner** – There are no documents available that would give indications as to the board’s decision making process in choosing Mrs. Buckner to serve as the first female African American Superintendent for South Holland School District 151. Her history related to the desegregation of the district and her commitment to all the children of the school district as a teacher, teacher leader and administrator made her the best choice. By 1989 Board Members Roberts, Boender, Broome, Smith, Hardy, Huntley and Short were seated. Three of the members were African American. The significant changes made by Mrs. Buckner with the moving of the 6th grade students to Coolidge and the move to attendance centers were supported by the board of education through the use of advisory and strategic planning committees. Board meeting minutes reflected school community based celebrations of student achievement, parent/teacher meetings, and community partnerships. The board’s actions during Mrs. Buckner’s leadership contributed to reassuring the school community of their putting the needs of children first.

**Mr. Berthard Mitchell, Jr.,** the district’s first male African American Superintendent continued to build upon the positive environment secured under the leadership of Mrs. Buckner and the board of education. His long standing relationship with the district as a teacher and administrator, coupled with his service to the students
within the community, made him an excellent candidate for the position. In 1994 Board Members Johnson, Broome, Hahn, Huntley, Roberts, Smith and Jones were seated. Four of the board members were African American. Board meeting minutes reflected school community based celebrations of student achievement, parent/teacher meetings, and community partnerships. There was no board actions noted in the minutes that would indicate any contentious concerns.

**Dr. Douglas Hamilton** worked collaboratively with his board of education while serving as superintendent. The challenges he faced during his tenure were met with the support of his board. Through the use of the strategic planning model and parent focus groups he was able to gather input from all the stakeholders within the school community. This contributed to an environment of trust and innovation and allowed the board to decide objectively what direction or actions they would take in the best interest of students. The board approved a tax referendum which passed successfully in 2003. Full day kindergarten was approved by the board and implemented in 2006. Renovations to the district’s schools have facilitated the move to a balanced school year which the board approved to begin during the 2013-2014 school year.

**Research Question 4**

According to the primary sources examined, what sources of authority based on Sergiovanni’s leadership framework were represented by the superintendents in their arguments?

The sources of authority demonstrated by **Dr. Watts** through his words and/or actions include:
Technical-rational and Professional Authorities - A long range detailed plan developed by Dr. Watts, based on the recommendations of the Survey Committee Report, to improve the district was shared with the board. Dr. Watts’ plan included curriculum continuity, innovation design, financial improvement, integration plan, district organization, technological advancement, facility development, community relations and personnel enrichment. Dr. Watts developed three advisory groups comprised of school community members to help guide the implementation of the plan: School Community Advisory Council, Instructional Program Cabinet and a Public Relations Committee.

Bureaucratic Authority – Dr. Watts formed the Integration Study Committee and identified the committee’s specific purpose, membership, and procedural plans with target dates.

Technical-rational Authority – Dr. Watts reported to the board that District 151 was in the low 25 percent of the 119 school districts in Cook County due to the district’s inability to support education as it had only recently been able to secure an increase to the Education Fund tax rate after twenty years. The board agreed to hold a tax referendum which proved to be successful.

Psychological Authority – When questioned by a member of the audience regarding whether the full-time employment of a teacher at Taft School would ensure a full-time math teacher at the Roosevelt School, he replied “…this would not be possible…unless we combine in some sort of an upper grade program, there would probably continue to be insufficient upper grade instruction in many schools.”
Moral and Technical-rational Authorities – When addressing the “Chicago Grasshopper” controversy at a board meeting, Dr. Watts stated that “…an integration problem does exist and the district has more than one community; in fact, of the total enrollment, approximately 30 percent are Negro students…The schools could be integrated without additional funds. The matter of finances related to teaching staff and not to transportation or building.”

Moral Authority – Dr. Watts stated that he did not invent the educational problems that previously a Survey Committee report sanctioned by the board, recommended many of the changes he had proposed. He apologized for the “grasshopper” and “old Dutch” terms, and stated “I cannot apologize for trying to move so quickly to do things that have been allowed to coast for many years.”

Technical-rational Authority – Dr. Watts prepared three alternatives to the 1968 Building Program known as Plans A, B, and C to present to the board for consideration.

Moral Authority – At the February 5, 1968 board meeting Dr. Watts confronted the audience regarding book rental fees that were not paid by some residents stating “This is a public school; this is a public school system; we offer education to everyone whether or not they can afford it individually, and I go on record for being for a public school system…if we start trying to buy education individually, eventually none of us will have it.”

Moral Authority – Dr. Watts addressed insinuations directed against him at the February 5, 1968 meeting. He faced the irate audience stating he wished he had invented their problem, and then he could have invented a solution with it. Dr. Watts also stated
that their current system was costing them money to maintain separate schools, and they maintain them in opposition to the 14th Amendment to the Constitution.

**Psychological Authority** – Dr. Watts continued to provide positive feedback to the staff, board members, and community members through memos focused on board unity, community harmony and a fresh approach to the future.

**Moral Authority** – Dr. Watts stated “…he believed court action was inevitable since the seven member all-White school board last rejected February 12 his proposal for integrating and improving the system.”

**Moral Authority** – Dr. Watts informed the board that he had a recommendation to present to the board that would comply with the Justice Department’s directive for a plan to be submitted by May 15 based on what was best for the education of youngsters and the U.S. Constitution.

**Moral Authority** – In commenting on the board’s decision to appeal the court order, Dr. Watts stated that he did not personally favor an appeal and that it did not deserve an appeal because it would divert time, interest, and money from the district. He believed the suit could have been prevented.

**Bureaucratic Authority** – The board amended a policy allowing Kennedy K-2 students to transfer to any other district school with a class size of less than thirty-three students at the July 12, 1968 board meeting. Dr. Watts objected to this method of amending an existing policy contrary to established board policies.

**Moral Authority** – Dr. Watts’ resignation letter openly criticized the board for their unprofessionalism and illegal practices. He admonished five of the members for
working with a negative pressure group involved in the misrepresentation of school issues. Dr. Watts sent his letter to Judge Hoffman and the local newspapers.

The sources of authority demonstrated by Dr. Van Dam through his words and/or actions include:

**Bureaucratic Authority** – Dr. Van Dam planned the opening of school under the court order requiring non-school individuals, including parents and reporters, banned from school grounds for two weeks. He made his presence known at Coolidge School on the first day monitoring the bus routes with Board President Louis Wiersma.

**Moral Authority** – Dr. Van Dam told the news media to stop trying to make news by seeking to incite the various factions of the community through distortion of facts, taking statements out of context and inserting their own conclusions and headlines in the articles.

**Technical-rational Authority** – The Status Reports submitted to Judge Hoffman included district statistics indicating the loss in enrollment and loss in state aid.

**Psychological Authority** – Dr. Van Dam urged the board to accept Title I funds that would help provide additional needed staff. He had two weeks before a decision was to be made. The vote was tabled.

**Moral Authority** – Dr. Van Dam made it clear to the board that they would have to leave it to their consciences if they did not approve the funds and the district’s appeal was rejected. The board approved the Title I funds by a vote of 5 to 2.

**Psychological Authority** – Dr. Van Dam discussed the concerns he had with the Coolidge principal to improve discipline, teacher supervision, schedules, and lunch
procedures. He asked the Coolidge principal to consider working with the Title programs for the district.

**Professional and Moral Authorities** – The board was concerned with moving the Black principal from Coolidge. Dr. Van Dam reminded the board that he was hired to administer the schools and was not concerned about integration or segregation as much as he was deeply concerned about the school program.

**Moral Authority** – The board’s attorney asked Dr. Van Dam to sign a letter apologizing and reinstating the former Coolidge principal to his position. He refused and prepared copies of all notes sent to the principal and board regarding his reasons for the transfer.

**Bureaucratic Authority** – Dr. Van Dam sent a letter to a group of Coolidge teachers reminding them of their obligations and that it was necessary to follow proper procedures with grievances.

**Moral Authority** – Dr. Van Dam presented a recommendation to the board for approval a federal program that would support the district teachers in learning to deal with racial tensions related to the desegregation order. The board did not approve the funding. Dr. Van Dam stated that he was trying to do something about preparing his teachers for next fall and he wanted to train the teachers to do a job; he wanted a solid program, not a bunch of hogwash.

**Bureaucratic Authority** – Dr. Van Dam stayed focused on providing a good educational program despite the permanent injunction. He hired experienced staff, increased curricular materials, required lesson plans to be submitted each Friday, required
monthly reports from administrators, issued a monthly newsletter, and formed Title
committees to submit proposals.

**Moral Authority** – Dr. Van Dam continued to pursue funding for the school
district. He contacted the mayors of South Holland, Harvey and Phoenix with no
success. He went to Washington, D.C. to seek funding for an upper grade center based
on his understanding that this had occurred previously with another school district
undergoing desegregation. He left Washington without funds. Dr. Van Dam also met
with State Senator Charles Claybough, Chairman of the Illinois Problems Commission
seeking funds for the school district. He was unsuccessful. Dr. Van Dam never stopped
seeking funding from any available resource.

**Psychological Authority** – Dr. Van Dam met with boards of the private schools,
churches, business organizations, and District 151 parent/student meetings urging their
support for the referendum. He encouraged students, teachers and board members to
carry signs in support of the referendum as they participated in the parade. The
referendum was successful after fifteen years of trying.

The sources of authority demonstrated by **Dr. Potter** through her words and/or
actions include:

**Bureaucratic Authority** – Dr. Potter implemented several new organizational
practices throughout the district that required building accounts to be turned over to her
office; mail received at her office first; and secured authorization by board to approve
textbook orders.
**Technical-rational Authority** – Dr. Potter recommended limiting the Pre-K program at eighty students and continued housing it at Madison and Taft Schools which the board approved. She also continued the summer school program based on available grant funding.

**Psychological Authority** – Dr. Potter participated in the recognition of the district’s teaching staff on National Teacher’s Day.

**Mrs. Buckner** relied on Moral Authority as she worked endlessly to change the educational environment for the children of Phoenix as a parent, a classroom teacher, an administrator and currently as a school board member. Her involvement in the 1968 desegregation lawsuit against the district provided the foundation for her never ending commitment to secure an equitable education for all students of District 151. The sources of authority demonstrated by Mrs. Buckner through her words and/or actions while serving as Superintendent of School District 151 include:

**Bureaucratic Authority** – Mrs. Buckner served in a dual role as superintendent of the district and principal of Coolidge School during her first year. She directed her staff to complete specific duties as she transitioned in her position as superintendent.

**Technical-rational Authority** – Mrs. Buckner worked with the board’s attorney to provide detailed information related to student assignment, faculty, staff, transportation, extracurricular activities and facilities in order to secure court approval to move the district’s sixth grade students to Coolidge School.

**Professional Authority** – Mrs. Buckner worked with Dr. Hamilton and the district’s Advisory Committee and Strategic Planning Committee members to gain
support to move the district’s sixth grade students to Coolidge School in order to address the issue of over-enrollment at the elementary schools.

**Technical-rational Authority** - Mrs. Buckner worked with the board’s attorney to provide detailed information related to student assignment, faculty, staff, transportation, extracurricular activities and facilities in order to secure court approval to restructure the district schools into attendance centers in order to eliminate the need for boundary changes to balance enrollment.

**Professional Authority** - Mrs. Buckner worked with her administrative team and the district’s Advisory Committee and Strategic Planning Committee members to gain support to restructure the district into attendance centers to eliminate the need for boundary changes to balance enrollment.

**Professional and Moral Authorities** – Mrs. Buckner stated in her discussion with the board that the move to attendance centers was needed to ensure educational equity via equalized enrollment at all K-5 buildings. This move would eliminate split classes and provide better access to support services and special programs for all students in the district. The change was approved by the board in August 1993.

The sources of authority demonstrated by Mr. Mitchell through his words and/or actions include:

**Professional Authority** – Mr. Mitchell was highly regarded and well respected by the staff and administration.
Moral Authority – Under Mr. Mitchell’s leadership, the first bilingual educational program that supported a growing Hispanic population within the community was established.

Professional Authority – Mr. Mitchell recognized the growth of the internet in the 1990s and focused on the technology needs of the district by purchasing more computers and establishing a computer lab at Coolidge School.

Professional Authority – Dr. Hamilton described Mr. Mitchell as a very supportive administrator who could be counted on no matter the concern. He had the ability to separate his personal feelings from his professional responsibilities.

The sources of authority demonstrated by Dr. Hamilton through his words and/or actions include:

Professional and Moral Authorities – Dr. Hamilton replaced the Dutch windmill emblem representing School District 151 with a more child centered emblem *Where Young Minds Grow* depicting three children star gazing.

Professional Authority – Dr. Hamilton presented the first district mission statement since 1958 to the board for approval. The mission statement reflected the district’s commitment to educational excellence through collaboration with the school community and focused on all of the children in the district.

Technical-rational and Professional Authorities – Dr. Hamilton and the board embarked upon the development of the district’s first five-year strategic plan under his tenure to assess their current situation in order to survive financially. The plan was comprised of committees involving community stakeholders under Dr. Hamilton’s
leadership. Data was collected and best practices were shared with the committees. The strategic plan resulted in the successful passage of the 2003 tax referendum and full day kindergarten program in 2006.

Technical-rational and Professional Authorities – Dr. Hamilton and the board started the second five-year plan in 2007. The five focus areas were curriculum, student evaluation and technology; personnel and staff evaluation; facilities; finance; and community relations. The curriculum, student evaluation and technology committee provided the driving force for the district to consider a move to a balanced school year. The plan was comprised of committees involving community stakeholders under Dr. Hamilton’s leadership. Data was collected and best practices were shared with the committees.

Moral and Professional Authorities – Dr. Hamilton provided information for individuals to think differently about what initiatives made sense in the best interest of students and in the best interest of the various communities.

Professional Authority – Dr. Hamilton worked with committees to contact the park districts, libraries and day care centers from the different communities to come together to form a coalition to consider providing enrichment activities to fill in during the intercession periods of the balanced school year.

Technical-rational and Professional Authorities – Dr. Hamilton recognized the move to a balanced school year was a significant change and had to be approached slowly and methodically. He made clear to parents, community members, teachers and staff the balanced school year model and which traditional things would not change.
Technical-rational and Professional Authorities – Dr. Hamilton was able to address the renovations of the district’s four schools due to good board management of the funds generated by the 2003 tax referendum. The renovations eliminated a major barrier to moving to a balanced school year. Architectural drawings were developed with input from staff incorporating best educational practices in the design process.

Moral Authority – Dr. Hamilton assisted in resolving the annexation issue that dated back to 1965 and finally settled in 2011 regarding property needed in order to enter into a partnership with the Phoenix community to build a library. The Barak Obama Learning Center was built as an addition to the Coolidge-Kennedy School.

Moral Authority – Hispanic students have always been counted as White when completing the required federal Status Reports submitted to the government according to the court order. Dr. Hamilton made a unilateral decision to create a separate enrollment category for Hispanic students in 2004. This action demonstrated the shift in demographics more accurately identifying an emerging Hispanic population within the school community.

Research Question 5

In response to the superintendent’s contextual description of the district’s needs, what values were represented in the board’s enacted policies and/or decisions?

Many of the board’s enacted policies and/or decisions were based on the values reflected by the White communities of South Holland and Harvey and did not consider the Black community of Phoenix. The local politicians involved were also influenced by the White communities and encouraged the school district to take up the fight against
busing. The powerful religious leaders within the community of South Holland supported the board in maintaining neighborhood schools. As noted:

Dr. Watts developed a plan for the district based on the Survey Committee Report recommendations that would not deny children an equal opportunity to learn; one being the formation of an integrated upper grade center. Board Member Richard Graf did not think the survey proved anything that he did not already know or suspect. He stated in his letter to Dr. Watts (Appendix H) that he got on the board to assure his area of representation. Mr. Graf also stated because of the attitude of the majority of the people in South Holland and Harvey, the board would lose all support for the schools if they integrate.

Board Member Graf moved to dissolve the district’s association with the Institute for Administrative Leadership whose stated purpose was to provide guidance in moving towards an integrated school community. Board Member Mr. McGee was not in agreement. The motion passed 6 to 1.

The board’s decision to fight the court order to desegregate the district was influenced by the White communities of South Holland and Harvey. Board Member Graf’s letter to Dr. Watts made a point of stating the community of Phoenix was not in the position financially to go against the majority who would be responsible for the largest part of the bill. The board continued to file appeals based on recommendations from their attorney Mr. Van Der Aa of South Holland.

Dr. Watts’ voluntary resignation was accepted by the board of education with a 5 to 2 vote. African American Board Member McGee and White Board Member Davis
voted no. Dr. Watts cited five board members who made decisions based on capricious political considerations and community pressures.

The influential Neighborhood Schools Committee pressured the board to not accept federal funds for fear the government would have more control over their district. Dr. Van Dam placed the onus on the board for not approving the acceptance of federal funds needed for school programs if the appeal was rejected. The Title funds were earmarked for Coolidge School based on the low income population of students. The board approved the application for Title funds with a 5 to 2 vote.

Reverend Ronald Brown of South Holland addressed a group of approximately 500 people at a Neighborhood Schools Committee rally. Board members, business men, religious leaders and politicians were present. Reverend Brown made it clear that “God” did not intend for the mixing of the races and believed it to be a disservice to all children to bring them together.

Dr. Van Dam continued to promote the need for more funds to improve the educational programs within the district. The board of education passed its last tax referendum in 1968. It would be another sixteen (16) years before the school community would agree to a tax increase.

With the board’s decision to stop fighting the court order after the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear their case in May 1971, the Neighborhood Schools Committee gradually became less influential. Life Safety funds were used to renovate Coolidge School in 1978. By March 1984 Dr. Van Dam was able to pass a tax referendum and calm the waters. The board was still influenced by community values; however, as the
racial composition of the board of education began to change due to changing demographics within the communities, there was more focus on providing equitable learning environments throughout the district. For Superintendents Mrs. Buckner, Mr. Mitchell, and Dr. Hamilton the move to implement the strategic planning model, advisory committees and parent focus groups helped to provide more input from stakeholders to the boards of education. This contributed to an environment of trust and innovation and allowed the board to decide objectively what direction or actions they would take in the best interest of students.

The board supported Mrs. Buckner’s recommendation to move the district’s sixth grade students to Coolidge School to address the concern of over-enrollment at the elementary schools. They also supported the move to attendance centers to provide for an equitable learning environment at all K-5 elementary schools.

The board supported Mr. Mitchell’s recommendation to implement the district bilingual education program to address the needs of the increasing Hispanic population within the school community. The board also supported Mr. Mitchell’s recommendation to increase the use of technology throughout the district establishing a computer lab at Coolidge School.

The board approved Dr. Hamilton’s recommendation for a tax referendum which passed successfully in 2003 and full day Kindergarten in 2006. The board approved renovations to the district’s schools in order to facilitate the innovative move to a balanced school year in 2013. Many of the board’s decisions under the leadership of Mrs. Buckner, Mr. Mitchell and Dr. Hamilton were still reflective of the community’s
values however; the decisions were more based on what was in the best interest of students.

**Summary and Discussion**

The South Holland community has a long history of self-imposed isolation with the church spreading its doctrine of living according to a strong moral code which spreads its influences over the home, school, and the individual until it directs the very activities and purposes of the community (Dobson, 1939). Dobson’s research in 1939 supports the actions of the 1967 school board in maintaining segregated facilities with little to no change taking place within the district despite the life altering social changes African Americans were undergoing due to the Civil Rights Movement. Dr. Watts recognized that the predominantly Dutch board members were guided by their community values and did not take into account the impact of their decisions upon the Phoenix community members or the students of the district. He tried to work with his board in providing information using an advisory committee to help inform their decision making but the board was heavily influenced by the Neighborhood Schools Committee. It was clear to Dr. Watts the social isolation the board promoted with their neighborhood schools policy resulted in the segregation of the Phoenix students. The South Holland community was against an integrated upper grade center and the board discarded Phoenix Board Member L. K. Watkins’ recommendation to build one. Dr. Watts was not able to recover from the comments he expressed about the South Holland Dutch residents at the Administrative Leadership Institute. The Neighborhood Schools Committee pressed the board to reject any recommendations made by Dr. Watts resulting in his loss of
credibility with the South Holland community. The Phoenix community held Dr. Watts in high esteem as he continued to uphold the duties of his position in providing guidance to the board as they implemented the desegregation court order. His leadership based predominantly on moral authority did not allow him to look the other way when it came to holding the board accountable for their behaviors and subsequently resigned after serving one year as superintendent. The board’s rejection of Dr. Watts’ leadership may be attributed to their perception that his moral views represented a challenge to their values and believed they were being judged based on their beliefs. Many of the religious leaders in South Holland also had a stronghold over the community and reinforced the notion that Black and White children should be separated because that was God’s plan. Dr. Watts found this thinking to be irrational and could not understand why the school community did not see their actions as being discriminatory.

According to Mrs. Buckner the reason the board hired Dr. Van Dam was because of his Dutch name and since he had experience working with black school communities he would be able to “handle” the Phoenix people. Dr. Van Dam stepped into a volatile school environment and had to find a way to calm the waters. Dr. Van Dam focused on improving the school programs, facilities and worked to pass a tax referendum. He led his board through the desegregation court order trying to balance the needs of the community with the needs of the students through the use of bureaucratic and psychological sources of authority. Dr. Van Dam was described by Dr. Hamilton and Mrs. Buckner as having a charismatic personality that helped him build relationships as he met with community leaders, religious leaders, politicians, and parents. According to
court testimony Dr. Van Dam was not considered a creditable witness as his account of events related to the district’s finances, personnel assignments and board conversations had a tendency to change. He worked closely with his board president and board committees providing information to help inform their decision making. However; Dr. Van Dam did not use advisory or strategic planning committees made up of community representatives since he was largely dealing with the negative impact of the Neighborhood Schools Committee (NSC). Dr. Van Dam might have prevented the NSC from becoming as powerful as it did had he offered equal support to the Better Education group and demonstrated leadership based on moral authority as well. Dr. Van Dam oftentimes exhibited situational leadership in interactions with his board and community members in trying to find common ground from which to build upon; however, he was often unsuccessful. As the board members changed so did the values they represented. The focus of the district gradually changed to addressing the needs of students and away from the fears of integration. Through the years Dr. Van Dam’s friendship with Mrs. Buckner developed and he supported her appointment as principal of Coolidge School. Dr. Van Dam succeeded in his quest to calm the waters which contributed to a more stable school environment for future superintendents.

Dr. Potter, a highly organized person, implemented changes to streamline office procedures, building operations and administrative duties. Mrs. Buckner confirmed that Dr. Potter was very good at organization; however, she had a difficult time relating to people especially her administrative team. It was interesting to note how the board meeting minutes became less detailed upon her appointment as superintendent. Dr.
Hamilton worked with Dr. Potter prior to her becoming superintendent and recognized her talent for organization; however, she lacked the necessary people skills to become an effective leader especially following the charismatic Dr. Van Dam.

Mrs. Buckner represents the heart of South Holland School District 151; the keeper of the stories. She shared in the frustrations of Dr. Watts as he tried to get the board to stop their segregated practices prior to the court order. Mrs. Buckner was distracted by the tactics employed by Dr. Van Dam as he bartered his way to restore calmness within the school community. She experienced the bureaucratic leadership of Dr. Potter and noted her lack of people skills. Mrs. Buckner’s past experiences helped inform her leadership practices based on professional and moral sources of authority. The pain of discrimination experienced by Mrs. Buckner as a parent and classroom teacher made her more aware of the need to monitor her school environment for impending changes. Mrs. Buckner was an advocate for educational equity for all students and made use of advisory and strategic planning committees to assist the board in their decision making process. Her successful move of the sixth grade students to Coolidge School followed by the move to grade centers represented major changes within the school community. Mrs. Buckner clearly outlined the need to restructure the elementary schools in order to maximize resources and provide educational equity for all students. She maintained a positive professional relationship with her board members and worked directly with the board president. Mrs. Buckner’s tenure marked the beginning of transformational leadership within the school district.
Mr. Mitchell continued with the vision instilled by Mrs. Buckner in providing equitable education to all students. The school environment was stable and decisions brought before the board were supported by community input through the use of advisory and strategic planning committees. Mr. Mitchell brought awareness to the board of the growing Hispanic population within the school community and recognized the need to establish a Transitional Program of Instruction for second language learners. His proactive leadership based on professional and moral sources of authority prevented possible marginalization of the Hispanic population within the school community.

Dr. Hamilton was well aware of the history of the desegregation of School District 151 and the impact it had on the culture of the school community. He was also aware of the pain and triumph Mrs. Buckner experienced due to the desegregation court order and was determined not to repeat the mistakes of the past as he led the district in their strategic planning for the future. Dr. Hamilton recognized the importance of keeping the board and community informed which contributed to the building of trust within the district. He continued to acknowledge the growing Hispanic population within his district and made sure they did not become a disenfranchised group. Dr. Hamilton’s move to eliminate the use of the Dutch windmill emblem helped to promote the district’s image of being all inclusive and earned the respect of the African American Phoenix community.
Summary of Sources of Authority

Dr. Watts predominantly based his leadership on technical-rational and moral sources of authority which contributed to a combative environment with his board and the school community. Much of his planning was based on the Survey Committee Report that addressed the needs of the district including an integration plan. There was no indication that Dr. Watts discussed his plans for the district during the interview process or in preliminary correspondence he had with the board prior to his hire. The August 1967 letter he received from Board Member Richard Graf could have served as the basis for discussion with his full board regarding their vision for the district and their feelings regarding the integration of the district with the building of an upper grade center. Dr. Watts is to be admired for his moral source of authority; however, I believe it backfired on him as he was perceived to be criticizing the school community’s family and religious values. He might have been more successful had he not referred to the South Holland residents as “Chicago Grasshoppers” as a means to describe the community’s fears of integration and focused instead on a single message of improving the educational programs as Dr. Van Dam had done. Dr. Watts might also have been more successful had he based his leadership on a mix of technical-rational, professional and moral sources of authority as a means to inform the board of ways to maximize resources and address the concerns of the Phoenix community. Dr. Watts remained true to himself as an educational leader despite his inability to effect change within the school community. He did, however, bring to light the many injustices his board of education continued to
engage in which eventually resulted in Judge Hoffman’s decision for the permanent injunction.

Dr. Van Dam on the other hand used several sources of authority to appease the board and work with the school community. He was not always successful but he stayed focused on his message of providing a solid educational program to encourage the support of the district’s families despite the court order. The situation within the community was so volatile that Dr. Van Dam had no choice but to apply situational leadership based on a source of authority in order to move the district forward. Unlike Dr. Watts, Dr. Van Dam was quick to please the board when directed to be prepared to change back to neighborhood schools upon approval of the appeal. Dr. Van Dam’s use of bureaucratic authority eased fears with the opening of schools under the court order. His uses of psychological and moral sources of authority to secure funds for the district were successful with his board but not necessarily with the external school communities. Dr. Van Dam was so many things to so many people that his credibility suffered when testifying during the court hearings. Mrs. Buckner described Dr. Watts as a moral leader who was handed a “hot potato” and got burned. She also described Dr. Van Dam as someone who did what needed to be done; calm the waters in whatever manner it needed to be done.

Dr. Potter was described by Mrs. Buckner as having excellent organizational skills much like Dr. Watts and used bureaucratic and technical-rational sources of authority to lead the district. It was a challenge for her because according to Dr. Hamilton she lacked the necessary people skills to build trust with her staff.
Mrs. Buckner applied bureaucratic source of authority predominantly during her first year serving in dual roles of principal and superintendent. She directed her staff to complete duties in a specific manner as she transitioned in her position as superintendent. Mrs. Buckner recognized the district’s past experiences and believed in leadership based on a culture of trust and transparency which required input from stakeholders. Her leadership was the cornerstone needed to move the district to change in innovative ways beginning with the sixth grade move back to Coolidge School and the elementary schools reorganized into grade centers. Mrs. Buckner demonstrated technical-rational, professional and moral sources of authority as she worked with her advisory and strategic planning committees to develop support for these changes and brought them forth to her board for approval. This is the same approach Mr. Mitchell and Dr. Hamilton implemented as superintendents.

Mr. Mitchell’s move to establish a Transitional Program of Instruction to address the growing Hispanic population’s needs was visionary. This was accomplished through the use of committee work guided by Mr. Mitchell’s use of technical-rational, professional and moral sources of authority.

Dr. Hamilton’s implementation of advisory and strategic planning committees was instrumental to his success to bring about change that led to a major innovation within the south suburbs – the implementation of the balanced school year. His leadership based on technical-rational, professional and moral sources of authority contributed to a school culture built on trust and transparency. During his tenure he was instrumental in the passage of a tax referendum, full day kindergarten, building
renovations, and the district’s move to a balanced school year. Dr. Hamilton was also instrumental in his support of Mrs. Buckner’s dream of building the Phoenix community their own library through a community partnership. His leadership, based on moral authority, made the dream a reality through innovative financing and planning. The Barak Obama Learning Center opened in the summer of 2012 as part of the Coolidge School facility in Phoenix, Illinois.

**Conclusion**

South Holland’s favored way of thinking trapped the community within their socially constructed world resulting in their inability to accept change as referenced by Morgan (1998). The South Holland community refused to accept the court ordered desegregation of their schools and were supported in their thinking by religious leaders, business owners, local politicians and community groups who held the same values and beliefs. The decisions of the board were supported to such an extent that the South Holland community did not or refused to recognize how oppressive those actions were towards the Phoenix community. The board’s decision to build neighborhood schools to address the overcrowded situation at Coolidge School coupled with the practice to allow White teachers to transfer out of Coolidge School as it became predominantly Black, only served to reinforce continued racial segregation and contributed to an unhealthy suppression of conflict.

The board’s actions can be attributed to Morgan’s (1998) characterization of the existence of a power relationship as one group having the ability to control scarce resources. In this case, the school board had influence over who gets what, when and
how because a majority of the members were White representatives from South Holland and Harvey. South Holland, Harvey and Phoenix each contribute a proportionate share to the tax base needed to support the operations of South Holland School District 151. However, the proportionate share of taxes collected from the residents of South Holland when compared to Phoenix represents a social relationship characterized by a financial dependency. A similar relationship holds true for the communities of Harvey and Phoenix. During the 1960s the City of Harvey, with the help of the White majority administration of Phoenix, annexed the southern portion of the village where White residents resided. This annexation resulted in Phoenix losing 35 percent of its general revenue in taxes and commercial business. This social division did not last as the Phoenix community came together to take a stand to fight for educational equity for their children by filing a lawsuit against the school district’s segregated practices.

Dr. Watts, Dr. Van Dam and Dr. Potter each demonstrated a strength that served the school district well. Dr. Watts was not prepared for the venomous feelings the residents of South Holland expressed against integration and relied predominantly on a moral source of authority. He dared to bring to light the segregated practices of the school district and the community’s underlying feelings of racism. Dr. Van Dam applied all sources of authority in a manner that calmed the waters but at the expense of his credibility. Dr. Potter’s leadership was based on bureaucratic and technical-rational sources of authority which did not contribute to creating an environment of trust and respect. Mrs. Buckner, Mr. Mitchell and Dr. Hamilton all made a conscience decision to pursue the community’s input in the decision making process when bringing
recommendations to their boards. This alleviated much of the pressure their boards faced knowing the recommendations were made with community support behind them. The key to this process then became getting the right representatives on the Advisory Committee and Strategic Planning Committee as well as the superintendents continuously monitoring their internal and external environments.

The importance of monitoring both the internal and external school environments can make the difference between leading within a harmonious setting or a contentious environment. Each superintendent demonstrated different sources of authority they believed to be the most effective at the time. The superintendents clearly show that not one single source of authority can be considered the “magic pill” for leadership. Leaders must be prepared to assess their surroundings continuously and move to expand the use of professional and moral sources of authority.

**Implications for Educational Leadership – Lessons Learned**

The following represents lessons learned based on superintendent decisions and board actions that occurred in South Holland School District 151 during the period 1967 through 2010.

1. Reliance on a single source of authority for leadership is not enough to address the many concerns raised by the internal (school programs, facilities, staffing, parent needs, achievement, etc.) and external (legal, social, political, community, etc.) environments. Dr. Watts’s use of moral authority is to be admired on one hand for bringing to light the segregated practices of the school district and the community’s underlying feelings of racism; however, it
appeared as though he was perceived to be criticizing the school community’s family and religious values leading to the South Holland community’s dislike and distrust of him. Dr. Van Dam used predominantly bureaucratic and psychological sources of authority along with technical-rational, professional and moral when the situation required them. Dr. Van Dam worked to appease the board, the communities, and the politicians while insisting on a high quality school program. His actions however, came with a price – his credibility. Mrs. Buckner, Mr. Mitchell and Dr. Hamilton were successful in their use of predominantly technical-rational, professional and moral sources of authority as they led the district through innovative changes.

2. Educational leaders/board members must address openly and equitably underlying concerns brought forth by members of the school community. The school community includes staff, students, parents, private schools, business people, local taxing bodies, senior citizens, and local politicians. The Phoenix community brought to the board’s attention the need for new books and not the hand-offs from Roosevelt School. They also needed the board to address the punitive treatment of their children by White teachers at Coolidge School. This too was found by the board to be inconsequential. The board of education continued to follow segregated practices which contributed to the Phoenix community’s demands for an equitable educational environment for all students. When their concerns went unanswered, they filed their lawsuit under the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Other board actions that contributed to
contentious feelings include: segregation of Black students and Black staff, maintaining policies and practices that continued to segregate the Phoenix students, and the construction of neighborhood schools that maintained the segregation of students.

3. Educational leaders must consistently monitor their internal and external school environment in order to be proactive in addressing underlying concerns. The boards under Dr. Watts and Dr. Van Dam insisted on maintaining practices that segregated the school community. The boards under Mrs. Buckner, Mr. Mitchell and Dr. Hamilton represented proactive leadership based on the school leaders monitoring of their internal and external environments.

4. School leaders/board members should not allow any one group exclusive access to power within their organization. The Neighborhood Schools Committee came into power with the support of the board of education, school administrators, business leaders, religious leaders, local politicians, private school parents, and public school parents. Equal access was not given to the Better Education, Inc. group or Phoenix residents. The board of education failed to recognize their duty to represent all children within a school district by supporting exclusively the Neighborhood Schools Committee and their principles. The board’s support of this organization contributed to a strong South Holland community covenant built on emotions
and social bonds that made them a formidable force and a source of votes for politicians.

5. Clear communication by school leaders is critical in establishing an environment of trust and transparency. During the tenure of Dr. Van Dam the communications/messages were ambiguous. There were so many misperceptions of the district that Board Member L.K. Watkins felt the White residents voted against the referendums because they believed they were being asked to pay for busing of Black students and Black residents believed they were being asked to pay for legal fees to fight the court order which resulted in no support of the district. There was no evidence that Dr. Van Dam provided any preliminary information to the three mayors prior to asking for funds. The South Holland and Harvey Mayors believed the school district received enough tax dollars from the public. Court records indicated that Dr. Van Dam was not a credible witness based on his changing testimony regarding school finance, facilities, and personnel. Whereas, Mrs. Buckner, Mr. Mitchell and Dr. Hamilton were able to bring about significant change through the use of clear communications and directives resulting in trust and transparency.

6. Superintendent’s use of advisory and/or strategic planning committees representative of the school community contributed to the process of informing the boards of education as recommendations were brought forth for approval. Dr. Watts tried to use an Advisory Committee to develop an
integration plan for the district but the backlash from the community prevented them from being successful. This leads to the question of whether or not Dr. Watts had the right people on the committee. Dr. Van Dam chose not to use committees because he felt they were ineffective as they did not understand the problems of the district; nor did he make an effort to explain the problems of the district to potential committee members. Mrs. Buckner, Mr. Mitchell and Dr. Hamilton used committees that proved to be effective in bringing forth recommendations to the board for approval as well as contribute to an environment of trust and transparency. Major innovations were approved by the board with little to no backlash from the community because of the leadership provided to the committees which were staffed with community members who would speak openly with others regarding the discussions and decision made which led to community support of the changes proposed.

7. Educational leaders must be aware of the need to assess their school environments focusing on diversity and inclusiveness in order to prevent the marginalization of any one group. This is not limited to issues of race or ethnicities but also includes gender, orientation, ability, social class and religious minorities. Mrs. Buckner, Mr. Mitchell and Dr. Hamilton reflected on the district’s mistakes of the past and were determined not to repeat them. This reflection was vital to their plans for the future. All three superintendents
were able to bring about innovative changes because of their assessment of the school environment.

8. The board of education and superintendent must identify clearly their defined roles and responsibilities in order to sustain a viable working relationship. The boards of education throughout this historical case study underwent periods of complete immersion that went beyond board governance and policy as in the case of Dr. Watts and Dr. Van Dam’s tenure. Mrs. Buckner, Mr. Mitchell and Dr. Hamilton worked more with bringing to their boards of education recommendations for governance and policy. The boards of education acknowledged their roles through limited interaction with the staff and community while recognizing and respecting the superintendents’ leadership roles.

9. Educational leaders must have a clear vision of the district in place. There was no clear vision for the district under the leaderships of Dr. Watts and Dr. Van Dam. The community was in distress over the clash of values of the South Holland and Harvey communities with the Phoenix community. The boards of education had no clear vision for the district due to their fighting of the court order resulting in their failure to address the needs of the students within their related communities. Mrs. Buckner, Mr. Mitchell and Dr. Hamilton recognized the need for a vision for the school community to follow. Their vision to provide the best equitable education available for all students within the district was made possible through the use of advisory and
strategic planning committees. These committees brought awareness to the boards of education which led to the approval of innovative changes within the district. The vision/mission of a district developed by the school community under the guidance of the superintendent’s leadership will provide the direction needed to stay the course. It serves as the road map to achievement because it is based on the school community’s beliefs about the district and its students. The mission statement for the school district states:

It is the mission of South Holland School District 151, in collaboration with parents, communities and businesses, to be committed to educational excellence by providing opportunities in a wholesome, nurturing environment; preparing all students to become life-long learners and productive citizens, who can meet the challenges of a changing society. There was no record of a mission/vision statement laid out for the community to adhere to during the time preceding the desegregation court order or after.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Areas for further study include a historical review of the state’s role in contributing to racial segregation of schools in Illinois. This may include how state funds may have been used to construct segregated facilities; school district reorganization based on White areas allowed to de-annex from Black areas; or actions where the state failed to act affirmatively to prevent school segregation.

The students in this case study affected by the desegregation order underwent significant changes as they were assigned to unfamiliar classroom settings in a different
community. A further study of the impact the court ordered desegregation had upon student achievement, race relations, and parent-student-teacher relationships within the district would provide additional data to inform school leaders in their decision making.

History plays an important role in decisions made today. This historical research identifies over time the shift in student demographics from a predominantly White district in 1968 to a predominantly Black district in 1984. The court order was dismissed in 2010 as there was no longer a need to integrate as the community had re-segregated due to housing patterns. A further study on the impact of re-segregation on student achievement, changes to socio economic status and level of peer group competition available within the district will help to inform leadership practices to identify ways to maintain a district’s attractiveness to all groups.
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: A Historical Analysis of South Holland School District 151 Desegregation Order: An Examination of Board and Superintendent Decisions Grounded in the Context of Prevailing Social, Political, Legal and Educational Conditions for the Period 1967-2010

Researcher: Cecilia Heiberger
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Janis Fine

Introduction:
You are being asked to participate in an oral history as part of a research study being conducted by Cecilia Heiberger for a dissertation in education under the supervision of Dr. Janis Fine in the Department of Education at Loyola University of Chicago.

According to the Oral History Association, “oral history is a method of gathering and preserving historical information through recorded interviews with participants in past events and ways of life.” You have been approached for an oral history because of your experience as a former Superintendent for South Holland School District 151 during the court order desegregation and its implementation covering the time period 1967 to 2010.

Purpose:
The goal of this oral history project is to examine how the Board of Education and Superintendent grounded their decisions within the prevailing social, political, legal and educational conditions of the time. This study will seek to identify the impact of those decisions upon succeeding Superintendents and examine how each Superintendent brought awareness to the Board as the rationale for the need to develop policy and/or make decisions. This oral history will supplement written records that support the segregation of African American students resulting in South Holland School District 151’s court ordered desegregation.

Procedures:
The oral history will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes. During the oral history you will be asked questions about your experiences as an employee of South Holland School District 151 serving in the capacity of Superintendent during the time frame of this research.

The oral history will be digitally recorded and transcribed. The results of your oral history will be used in dissertation work.

Risks/Benefits:
The risks associated with participation in this oral history are minimal. There are no direct benefits to you from participation, but your willingness to share your knowledge and experiences will contribute to a greater understanding of leadership practices of Superintendents as they guide their Boards in the development of policy and/or decision making.
Confidentiality:
Unless you check below to request anonymity, your name will be referenced in the transcript, digital recording and in any material generated as a result of this research. If you request anonymity, the recording of your oral history will be closed to public use, and your name will not appear in the transcript or referenced in any material obtained from the oral history.

Upon completion of the oral history you will be asked to sign a “Deed of Gift” form to donate the transcript and digital recording of the oral history to the Loyola University Women and Leadership Archives Collection. If you choose to sign the “Deed of Gift” form, the materials from your oral history will remain the property of the Loyola University Women and Leadership Archives and will be available for use by others. The oral history digital recording and transcripts will be returned to you if you choose not to donate them to the Loyola University Women and Leadership Archives.

Voluntary Participation:
Your participation in this oral history is voluntary. Even if you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the oral history without penalty, or request confidentiality, at any point during the oral history. You may also choose not to answer specific questions or discuss certain subjects during the oral history or to ask that portions of our discussion or your responses not be recorded.

Contacts and Questions:
If you have any questions about this research project or oral history, feel free to contact Cecilia Heiberger at cheiberger@x158.net or the faculty sponsor Dr. Janis Fine at jfine@luc.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Statement of Consent:
I agree to participate in this oral history, and to the use of this oral history as described above. My preference regarding the use of my name is as follows:

☐ I agree to be identified by name in any transcript or reference to the information contained in this oral history.

☐ I wish to remain anonymous in any transcript or reference to the information contained in this oral history.

Jessica Buchanan
Participant’s Signature

[Signature]

Date

[Date]

[Date]

Researcher’s Signature
APPENDIX B

ORAL HISTORY PROTOCOL
Oral History Protocol

1. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this oral history. Before we formally begin, I would like to remind you of your rights as a research participant. At this time I would like you to read the Consent to Participate in Research form. After you have read it, I am going to invite you to state your rights as a participant in this study. Then I will ask you to sign two copies of the Consent to Participate in Research form, one which will be given to you and the other which will be kept in my research files.

2. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you have the right to end your involvement at any time for any reason. You can decline to answer any question at any time. Unless you request anonymity, your name will be referenced in the transcript, digital recording and in any material generated as a result of this research. At the conclusion of the oral history you will be asked to sign a form to donate the transcript and digital recording of the oral history to Loyola University Women and Leadership Archives Collection.

Open-ended Question:

South Holland School District 151 has come a long way since Judge Julius Hoffman’s court ordered desegregation in 1968. Please share what you recall took place prior to and during the desegregation experience beginning with your earliest memories as a classroom teacher including your service as Superintendent of South Holland School District 151.

Probes:

Climate/Environment
• What were the social and educational climates like during the 1960s in South Holland?
• What were the political and legal climates like during the 1960s in South Holland?

Concerns/Issues
• Can you tell me anything about the group of people who filed the lawsuit?
• What were some of the major concerns raised by the Phoenix parents?
• How did you perceive the Board’s responsiveness to the concerns raised by the Phoenix parents?
• What were some of the actions you recall that the Board took to ensure an equal and equitable learning environment for all students?
Desegregation Order
• In what ways did your superintendent support the teaching staff through the desegregation of the South Holland Schools?
• Why do you think the Board was so adamant about taking a stand against Judge Hoffman’s order to desegregate the district?
• How have the students benefitted from the desegregation court order?

Superintendent
• What prompted you to pursue the position of Superintendent of South Holland SD 151?
• What were some of the major decisions you made and what served as your underlying guiding principle in making those decisions?
• What process did you use to bring awareness to your Board regarding concerns or issues that may involve the need to develop policy or make decisions?
• Please share a time, if any, when you have been in the position of not agreeing with your Board and had to convince them to move in another direction?
APPENDIX C

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH – INTERVIEW
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

**Project Title:** A Historical Analysis of South Holland School District 151 Desegregation Order: An Examination of Board and Superintendent Decisions Grounded in the Context of Prevailing Social, Political, Legal and Educational Conditions for the Period 1967-2010

**Researcher:** Cecilia Heiberger

**Faculty Sponsor:** Dr. Janis Fine

**Introduction:**
You are being asked to participate in an interview as part of a research study being conducted by Cecilia Heiberger for a dissertation in education under the supervision of Dr. Janis Fine in the Department of Education at Loyola University of Chicago.

You have been approached for an interview because of your experiences, as the current Superintendent for South Holland School District 151, related to the court order desegregation and its implementation covering the time period 1967 to 2010.

**Purpose:**
The goal of this interview project is to examine how the Board of Education and Superintendent grounded their decisions within the prevailing social, political, legal and educational conditions of the time. This study will seek to identify the impact of those decisions upon succeeding Superintendents and examine how each Superintendent brought awareness to the Board as the rationale for the need to develop policy and/or make decisions. This interview will supplement written records that support the segregation of African American students resulting in South Holland School District 151’s court ordered desegregation through its final status as a unitary district.

**Procedures:**
The interview will take approximately 60 minutes. During the interview you will be asked questions about your experiences as an employee of South Holland School District 151 serving in the capacity of Superintendent during the time frame of this research.

The interview will be digitally recorded and transcribed. The results of your interview will be used in dissertation work.

**Risks/Benefits:**
The risks associated with participation in this interview are minimal. There are no direct benefits to you from participation, but your willingness to share your knowledge and experiences will contribute to a greater understanding of leadership practices of Superintendents as they guide their Boards in the development of policy and/or decision making.
Confidentiality:
Unless you check below to request anonymity, your name will be referenced in the transcript, digital recording and in any material generated as a result of this research. If you request anonymity, the recording of your interview will be closed to public use, and your name will not appear in the transcript or referenced in any material obtained from the interview.

Upon completion of the research, the digital recording and transcript of the interview will be returned to you.

Voluntary Participation:
Your participation in this interview is voluntary. Even if you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the interview without penalty, or request confidentiality, at any point during the interview. You may also choose not to answer specific questions or discuss certain subjects during the interview or to ask that portions of our discussion or your responses not be recorded.

Contacts and Questions:
If you have any questions about this research project or interview, feel free to contact Cecilia Heiberger at cheiberger@d158.net or the faculty sponsor Dr. Janis Fine at jfine@luc.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Statement of Consent:
I agree to participate in this interview, and to the use of this interview as described above. My preference regarding the use of my name is as follows:

✔ I agree to be identified by name in any transcript or reference to the information contained in this interview.

_ I wish to remain anonymous in any transcript or reference to the information contained in this interview.

Participant’s Signature: ____________________________  Date: 6/28/12

Researcher’s Signature: ____________________________  Date: 6/28/12
APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS PROTOCOL
Interview Protocol

1. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this oral history interview. Before we formally begin, I would like to remind you of your rights as a research participant. At this time I would like you to read the Consent to Participate in Research form. After you have read it, I am going to invite you to state your rights as a participant in this study. Then I will ask you to sign two copies of the Consent to Participate in Research form, one which will be given to you and the other which will be kept in my research files.

2. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you have the right to end your involvement at any time for any reason. You can decline to answer any question at any time. Unless you request anonymity, your name will be referenced in the transcript, digital tape and in any material generated as a result of this research. At the conclusion of the interview you will be asked to sign a form to donate the transcript and digital tape of the interview to South Holland School District 151 Archives Collection.

3. Protocol Questions:
   a. Prior to becoming the superintendent of School District 151, please share your educational employment experiences.
   b. What has been the impact of the court ordered desegregation upon the school district and the surrounding community since your service as superintendent?
   c. What has your district been required to submit to the courts to ensure its compliance with the desegregation order?
   d. What actions or changes have been made within your district to ensure a transition to a unitary status as defined by the federal courts?
   e. How do you perceive the board of education’s responsiveness to concerns currently raised by parents and community members within the district?
   f. As superintendent, what major changes have you had to address/continue based on the actions of your predecessor, Mr. Berthard Mitchell?
   g. As superintendent, what were some of the major decisions you were faced with and what serves as your underlying guiding principle in making these decisions?
   h. In consideration of the decisions you make, how are they grounded in the prevailing social and political conditions of the time?
   i. In consideration of the decisions you make, how are they grounded in the prevailing legal and educational conditions of the time?
   j. What process do you use to bring awareness to your board of education regarding concerns or issues that may involve the need to develop policy or make decisions?
   k. Please share a time, if any, when you have been in the position of not agreeing with your board of education or perhaps had to somehow convince them to move in another direction. How did you address the situation?
APPENDIX E

TRANSCRIPTOR CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT
TRANSCRIBER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I, Laura O'Brien, agree to transcribe the interviews for the doctoral research of Cecilia Heiberger, entitled "A historical analysis of South Holland School District 151 desegregation order: An examination of board and superintendent decisions grounded in the context of prevailing social, political, legal and educational conditions for the period 1967 – 2010." I will maintain strict confidentiality of the data files and the transcripts. This includes, but is not limited to the following:

- I will not discuss them with anyone but the researcher.
- I will not share copies with anyone except the researcher.
- I agree to turn over all copies of the transcripts to the researcher at the conclusion of the contract.

I have read and understood the information provided above.

Laura O'Brien  
Transcriber's Signature  
June 23, 2012  
Date

Cecilia Heiberger  
Researcher's Signature  
June 23, 2012  
Date
APPENDIX F

DR. WATTS’ ACTIVITY REPORT FOR DISTRICT 151
ACTIVITY REPORT

For: School District 151
South Holland, Illinois

Date: October 3, 1967

1.0 Activities since June Workshop:

1.1 July 10, 1967
Initial presentation by Superintendent to Board of Education of plan for integration study committee.

1.2 July 24, 1967
Public review of revised plan calling for cross-sectional School/Community Advisory Council; Board approval of revised plan.

1.3 August 7, 1967
Nominees for School/Community Advisory Council submitted by Board members and P-TA Presidents.

1.4 August 9, 1967
Superintendent met personally for "get-acquainted" session with area CORE leaders.

1.5 August 21, 1967
Board announcement and appointment of School/Community Advisory Council membership.

1.6 August 30, 1967
Letter to all School/Community Advisory Council members scheduling September 14 meeting.

1.7 September 5, 1967
Opening of school without incident; increase to two (2) Negro teachers per school in each of four nath-Negro schools.

1.8 September 14, 1967
First meeting of Council for review of purposes and election of officers.

1.9 September 26, 1967
Second meeting of Council for review and approval of proposed "timetable."
Activity Report - Institute for Administrative Leadership

1.10 September 27, 1967 Final decision made to split into separate teams for District 203 and District 151.

1.11 September 29, 1967 Appointment of District team for October 6-8 Institute session.

2.0 Problems

2.1 Community separation between Phoenix and South Holland - de jure & de facto geographically separated by vacant farm land and railroad tracks. Segregated by community organization and housing into separate isolated areas with very little communication.

2.2 Finance

2.2.1 Traditionally low property valuation and educational tax rate has caused a very inadequate financial situation resulting in a very minimal education program for all youngsters compounding the limitations of cost by segregated education.

2.2.2 Low valuation and continuously increasing enrollment has forced a continuous "squeeze" on school facility space and school building planning and construction; present maximum utilization of bonding power virtually eliminates the planning and construction of any centrally located junior high or middle school facility for the next 5 to 8 years. Only alternative will be some make-shift arrangement to utilize present facilities differently.

2.3 Initial discussion and resulting publicity for integration study received very reserved and often extremely negative response from non-Negro community.
3.0 Future Plans:

3.1 School/Community Advisory Council "Timetable" (attached) calls for definite integration study, policy development, and action plan development from January through July, 1968. Planned activities call for involvement of Institute Faculty with Advisory Council during January to July phases.

3.2 Prepare proposal for model Early Childhood Education Center to be located at Kennedy School in present Negro community.

3.3 Human relations workshop for selected staff members in April and May or August of 1968.

3.4 Begin limited implementation of central junior high program in September of 1968.
APPENDIX G

DR. WATTS’ LETTER OF RESIGNATION
TWICE IN the last ten weeks four or five members of the Board acting as a majority for the Board in Executive Session have asked me to resign for "public relations" purposes. Supposedly, my departure would "buy" votes for future school elections. If you are as truly interested as you say you are in having a better, more harmonious school district, I would suggest that the five Board members who have been seeking and have now received my resignation also resign immediately with the request that the two remaining qualified Board members appoint five new Board members who are better educated, seriously interested in improving local schools but with no "ax to grind," and less politically partisan. Certainly such a new Board working with a new Superintendent would not be haunted or limited by the questionable and unsuccessful record and reputation that will continue to hamper the present Board.

Why should five Board members resign? At least the same four, and occasionally five, members of the present Board have proven themselves in the last three months to be inept and unworthy of the great responsibility and trust required for good Board members. To support my personal judgment of this unfitness, I refer to the unethical, improper, or unwise practices which have characterized the actions of the current Board majority in recent weeks. Specifically, I would include the following actions: (1) informal private "social gatherings" before and/or after Board meetings or on weekends involving from two to four or five Board members; (2) failure in word and deed to represent and regard the entire district as a whole; (3) partisan communication and working liaison with a small, negative pressure group involved in deliberate misrepresentation of school issues and plans, perversion, and character assassination; (4) flagrant disregard for official Board policies and procedures on at least three occasions in the last two months; (5) use of lengthy, unnecessary Executive Sessions to discuss educational plans and strategies that are not classified or confidential legal elements but are basic school district plans involved in the current litigation; (6) the very justly much criticized private decision of two replacement Board members on May 7; (7) unnecessary and unwise involvement in the present wastefully expensive and virtually hopeless legal action; (8) a stated commitment to and proven record of making decisions based on uncertain, capricious political considerations and pressures rather than on more basic principles and educational purposes. Your earlier request for my resignation was based on far less than the above. A major change in the Board of Education would also accomplish far more to alter and improve the course of events in the school district than any change in a single administrator. Both changes together would offer the school district a fresh start free of prior commitments and unwholesome alliances. I challenge you to have the courage and unselfishness to step aside now.
ALTHOUGH I would hope that you would see the promise and wisdom in having a new Board as well as a new Superintendent, I recognize the difficulty of such a decision on your part. Because of pride or stubborness, some who most need to resign probably will not be courageous, unselfish, or wise enough to put the school district's future ahead of personal interests. Thus, since you may continue your difficult struggle, please let me offer three definite suggestions for the Board to consider should you decide to begin to fulfill in every respect your full responsibility as a positive, progressive Board of Education.

First, learn to be leaders and shapers of positive public opinion for the educational improvement of your schools. Make firm, high-minded decisions based on educational facts and need rather than on misinformed or obviously biased or nasty expression from various segments of public opinion. Listen politely but carefully to everyone but do not simply act or react to every passing pressure group. If your initial actions have been based on sound principles in the best total interests of the whole school district, rather than as compromising political maneuvers, you can be consistent in supporting and promoting the successful implementation of your decisions.

Secondly, secure a new Board attorney. Seek out and enter into a specific written working agreement with some highly regarded, even if expensive, attorney whose personal interests, concerns, livelihood, and personal destiny are wholly outside and separate from the events and people of this school district. Use this legal counsel very sparingly on the basis of absolute need for legal advice or work. Consult this attorney only through your Superintendent and acting always as the whole, official Board and never, even for communication or counsel, through a single Board member or committee. This change alone in March and April of this year probably could have prevented the present suit.

THIRDLY, and last but most important, bury this unnecessary and hopeless legal action immediately where it belongs — in the past — and return to your very critical and now even more difficult educational responsibilities. Seek out a truly high quality Superintendent, even if it takes a year to make such a permanent selection and even if he is more expensive than I am (for he should be). This task will be extremely difficult but I hope not impossible — difficult because recent events and some local conditions make this District rather undesirable to all but the most eager and hardy of my contemporaries.

In spite of our recent differences and my extremely frank words in this letter — which I thought were important and necessary and which I hope will challenge or shock you into some better course of action — I do wish you good luck. In leaving, I do want to reaffirm my unending confidence in the faculty of your schools. Even in spite of you or me, school and education can go on. In 1968-69 in district 153 in their hands. I have the same continuing confidence in most of the public community. In spite of the viciousness and often ignorant or biassed few, the majority of our citizens here are fine people, responsible for and responsive to better education if the leadership is provided by a positive, progressive Board of Education.
APPENDIX H

BOARD MEMBER LETTER TO DR. WATTS
Dear Chuck,

This is a poor substitute for the talk we had scheduled for tonight, and I must offer my apologies for reneging. Believe it or not, but I ran into something more important than school work - and I assure you, this has been unheard of, except for vacations, in the four years on the board.

I'll ramble on about things as they come to me, so this may be disjointed, but for a start, it will give you an idea of what to expect from me. First, I don't think the survey proved anything I didn't expect, knew about, or suspect. It merely formalized some of the problem areas - finances, administration, morale and the type of educational system a group of educators would suggest.

One of the reasons I originally got on the board was to assure our area of representation on the board. This in no way changes my thinking that regardless of the child, the location of the school or the attitude of the parents, we must provide adequate facilities and opportunities for education of all children. However, because of the attitude of the majority of the people in South Holland and Harvey, we will lose all support for the schools, both in finance and community effort. They don't want the schools integrated. I see no reason myself for integrating the schools for the sake of integration. Last children today are no angels - I haven't been a parent for 20 years for nothing and I keep my card open. However, until such time as we can upgrade the new influx into Phoenix, such as we are attempting to do at the Kennedy School, I'm forced to object to a plan for integration per se. You will get support from some surprising areas in So. Holland for your plan - but unless I'm very much mistaken, any plan approved by So. Holland will be an exchange plan between Coolidge and Taft, leaving So. Holland just as it is. Since the completion of the Taft school, I have discovered something else that has never occurred in my family or any neighborhood before - my daughter, other children, and the parents, have a much deeper interest in the school itself than they ever had while attending Roosevelt. This is their school! Before they all considered themselves somewhat of orphans. Not all the children, and not all the parents, but the majority. The PCA clique in Roosevelt is a powerful, close knit group who does not interfere from "outsiders". Take a look at the last board election. He rocked the boat too much, Mr. Harrel, a former teacher I believe, is the only one that really looks at education as a means to a better end, I haven't decided yet what Mr. Bassett and Mr. Waterman are after. You know how I feel about Madison school - but even there, there are some honest, well meaning, interested, but quiet parents. The people at Eisenhower on the whole, just want their children educated, with a principle and teachers, who they can rely on and talk to. You'll get very little support for an integration plan from this group. Yet, these areas I have discussed are the very areas that we need to cultivate to get adequate support for our schools. From reports I have been able to glean, thru various sources, the plan of integration proposed had pretty well knocked out the support I had hoped for to pass a tax referendum. This was the reason I had hoped we had gotten started first with our Community Advisory Council - and had it staffed with at least equal parts pro and con on the integration proposition. More important, our community relations are at low ebb and, before we start any program and especially one as controversial as as integration, we have a long way to go. I'm very pleased with the business like manner you have approached our problem - your positive approach has not only enhanced you in the public's eye, but I'm sure it reflects on the Board for having chosen a man of your calibre - I feel safe in saying this without worrying about whether your hat fits or not after you read this. I'll back this up by supporting you wherever I possibly can, and to the utmost.

I firmly believe that before we can go further, the taxpayer must be convinced that the needed overhauling of our present school system is an accomplished fact - or at least in the process. You have to become known in the district, personally. The invitation you received from the Taft school PTA for September was a step in this direction. I hope you have received the same invitation from Eisenhower. Roosevelt and Madison are so well
If you haven’t received an invitation from Coolidge, I would suggest you impose yourself on them at their first meeting and insist on an evening program – both to introduce yourself and the new principle.

I would advocate going ahead with the expansion program we had planned for Manchester and Madison schools, starting with discrimination and the balance as funds are available. This is a condition of the passage of the Bond Issue in 1964. Don Lusher feels quite differently about the situation that made us take the action we did in 1964, but then he was quite natural for a senior High School idea and anything less was not acceptable. He wasn’t in the position of using for the current means of cutting urgently needed classrooms regardless of the wishes of the least financially interested as against the majority who would foot the largest part of the bill.

Rushing of students to me is a terrific waste of money and time. Perhaps “some educator” can convince me that a middle school program is the only means of obtaining adequate teachers to staff our schools. When the time comes, I’ll consider it, but the program will have to include a new building, or a centrally located building large enough to include the present students and the middle school children. I’ll fight indiscriminately grouping throughout the district of children just to balance the load. This was tried to a limited extent once and was most unsatisfactory.

So far as relations with other board members are concerned, they somewhat speak for themselves – Dowden and McRae are new so I don’t know how they fall or what they think of me. Of the seven board members, I’m positive Sally Davis and I are in perfect agreement on what we need, or should do. I think there’s been a slight parting of the ways between the rest of the Board and ourselves.

There are two other points that I would like to comment on. First, for a representative...
APPENDIX I

MAP OF SOUTH HOLLAND SD 151
APPENDIX J

COURT RELEASE OF SOUTH HOLLAND SD 151 CASE 68C755
IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS
EASTERN DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

v.

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 151, et al.

Plaintiff,

Defendants.

No. 68 C 755

ORDER

This 1968 case is still open on the docket of this court despite the fact there has been no action for many years. The last docket entry was on January 12, 2007, noting the filing of a status report by the defendant school district.

We have inquired of the attorney for the school district as to whether the District would have any objection to dismissal of the case at this time and have been informed that the District has no objection. We have attempted to correspond with the attorney for the Department of Justice who is last shown on the docket as representing the government, but our letters have been returned unopened.

There appears to be no reason to retain this case in a pending status, and, accordingly,

This cause is hereby dismissed.
DATE: March 25, 2010

ENTER: John F. Grady, United States District Judge
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South Holland Historical Society Archives. R. Scheldberg, President, South Holland, Illinois 60473.


VITA

Cecilia Villanueva Heiberger, the daughter of Santiago Gallardo and Adelina Bonilla Villanueva, was born and raised on the South Side of Chicago in the Bridgeport neighborhood. She attended Chicago Public Schools and graduated from Jones Commercial High School in 1974. Cecilia completed her first Bachelor of Science degree in finance from Purdue University in 1992 and her second Bachelor of Arts degree in elementary education from Governors State University in 1997. She went on to complete her Master of Arts degree in educational administration from Governors State University in 2003. Cecilia was accepted into Loyola University’s doctoral program in 2007.

Cecilia worked in the business sector before changing careers and entering the field of education. She began as a playground supervisor for Lansing School District 158 where her two sons attended and volunteered to help tutor children after school. Cecilia moved to substitute teaching in the district before being employed full time as a middle school math teacher for six years. She went on to serve Lansing School District 158 as the Assistant Principal for Memorial Junior High School for one year prior to being assigned the position of Principal of Coolidge Elementary School where she served for five years. Cecilia is currently serving as the Superintendent of Lansing School District 158 for the past four years.
The Dissertation submitted by Cecilia Villanueva Heiberger has been read and approved by the following committee:

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